THE LONG MORNING OF THE SUPERGRAPHIC FOLLIES

A Novella of Radical Joy in Twenty-One Colours

Being an account of one night in which every folly on the island of Mannahatta left its plinth, walked the whole length of the ridge, and was not put back exactly where it had been

Surjan

with the aid of Claude

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

Published by Surjan Super School.

Sixteen plates by the author. Set in EB Garamond and IBM Plex Mono.

There is no black in this book. The darkest value in the linework, the terrain, the water, the city behind, and the night is a warm taupe at #5C5142.

This is not a style. It is a promise, and it is kept on every page.

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Catalogue of Plates

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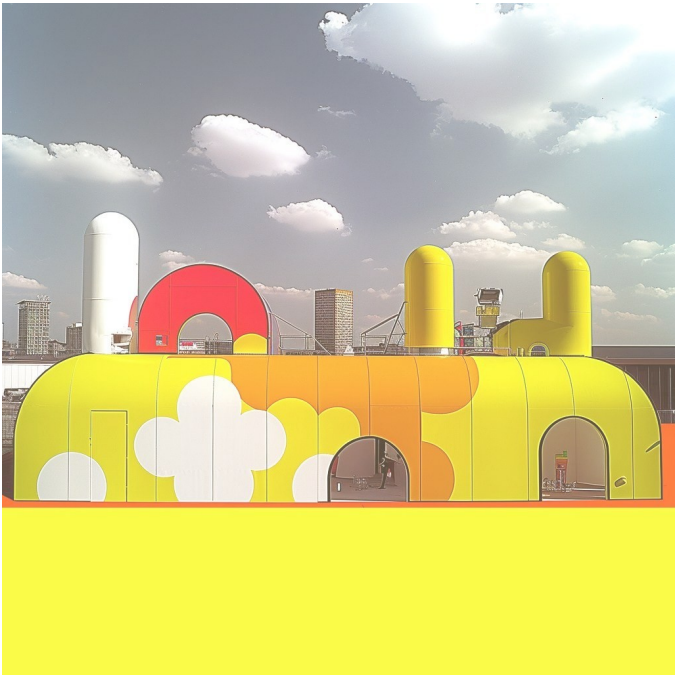
The Seven Specimens

Seven of the twenty exist as photographs before they existed as drawings. They arrived that way — as images of objects that had not been built, in colours that had not been specified, standing on ground that was not named — and the register was made by measuring them.

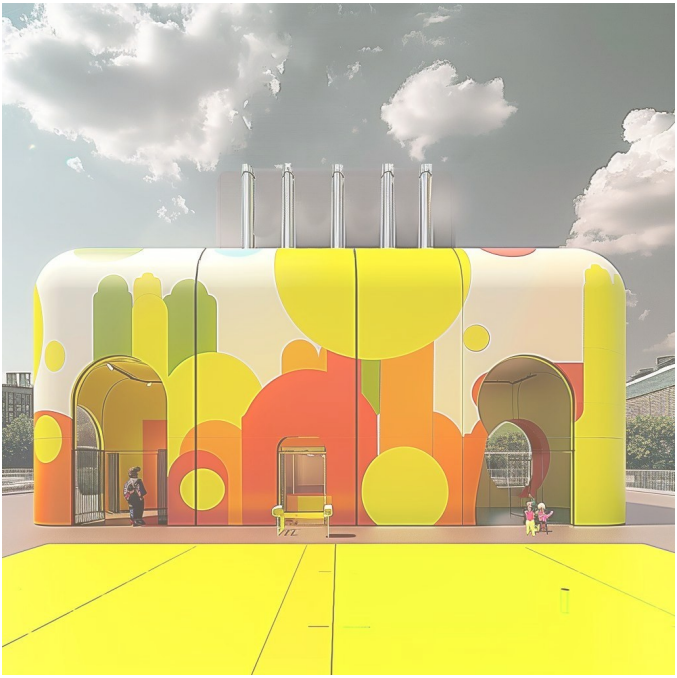
They are reproduced here at the tone of the book. Every one of the seven originals contained black, and the black has been lifted to the warm taupe at the bottom of the register, so that the specimens sit inside the palette rather than arguing with it. Nothing else has been altered. The follies you have been reading about are the drawings; these are what the drawings were taken from.



SPECIMEN A

F-07 · THE VAULTED TANKFARM

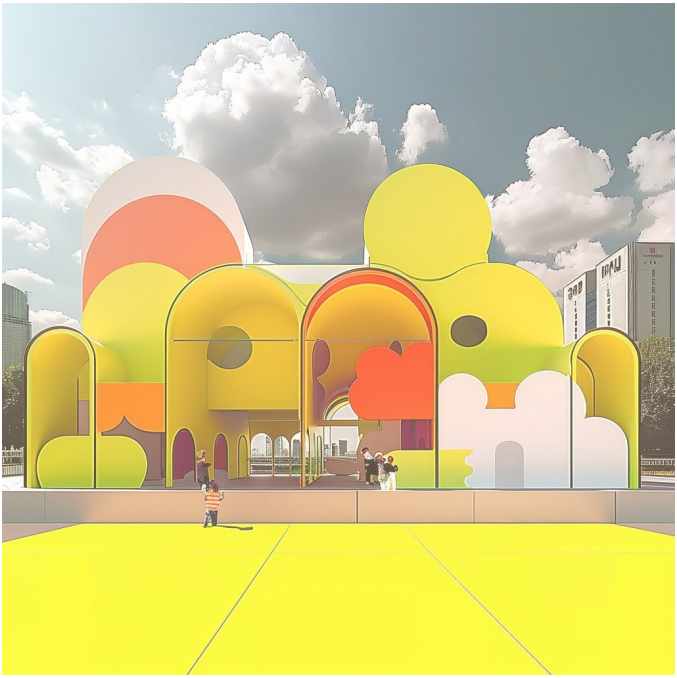
The barrel vault at the Battery. The longest back on the island, and the one that is for leaning on. Three capsules and a red donut on the crown; forty-six ribs; the first plate of the twenty and therefore the worst drawn.



Specimen B

F-01 · THE STACK BAR

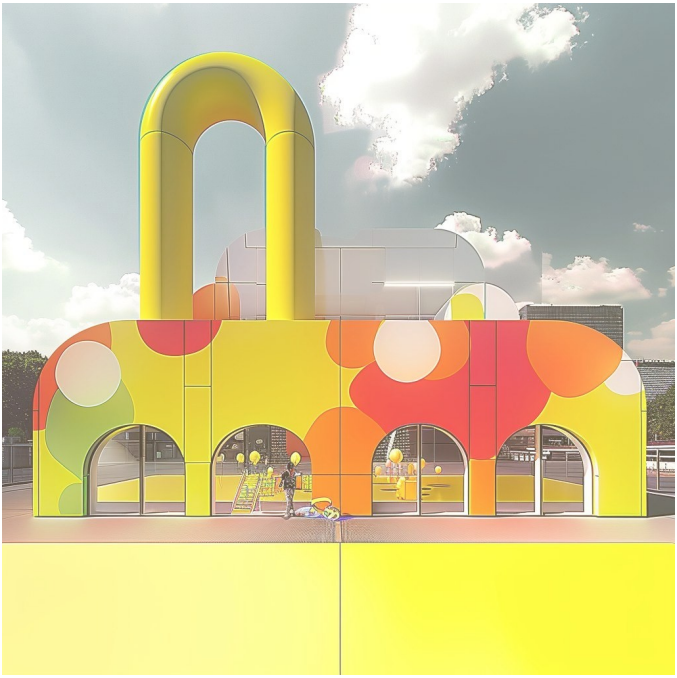
Five flues on a lozenge bar. The one that counts aloud, and has never once used the tally against anybody. Fifty-six ribs, magenta and pink and rose, Pier 76.



Specimen C

F-02 · THE LOBED ARCADE

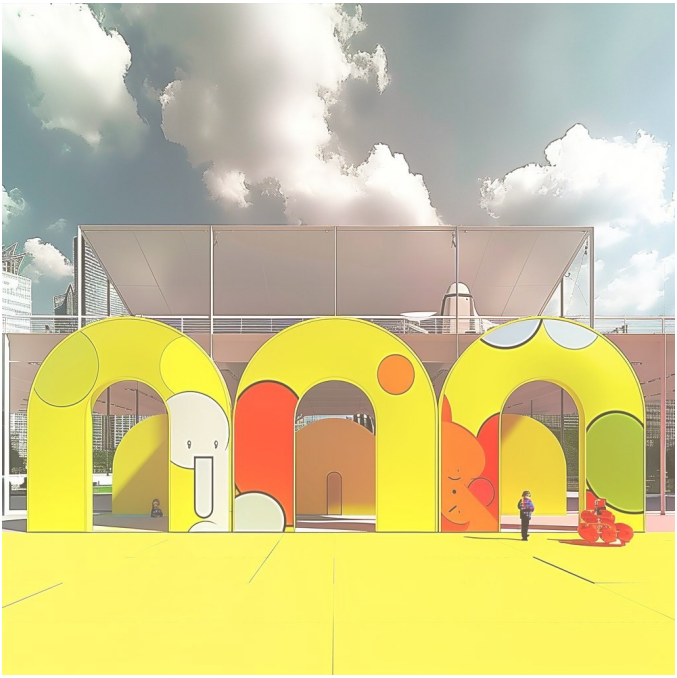
Five lobes and every one of them a doorway. The one that agrees warmly and then adds one thing. It makes room, and it has been making room in an empty meadow for a hundred years.



Specimen D

F-03 · THE HAIRPIN

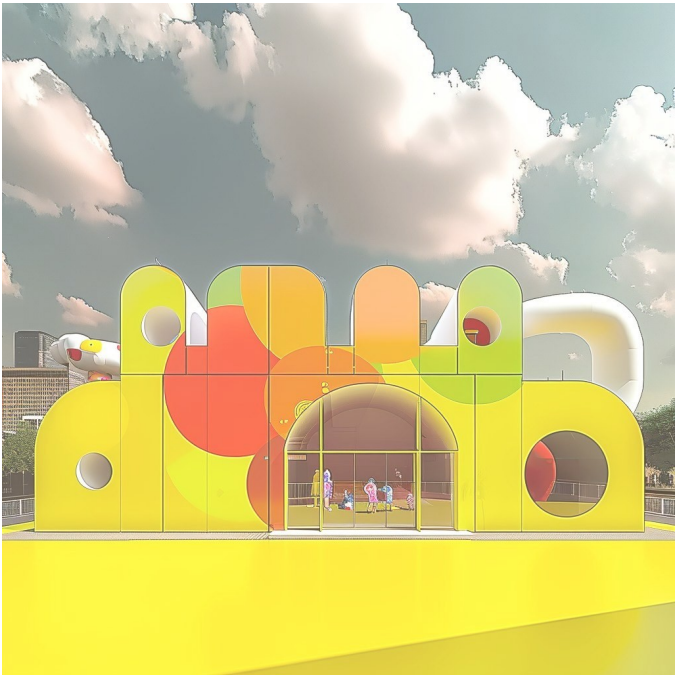
An annulus and a block: the turn, drawn as a building. Tallest of the twenty by eight feet, and the only one that has never mentioned it.



Specimen E

F-04 · THE TRIPLE PORTAL

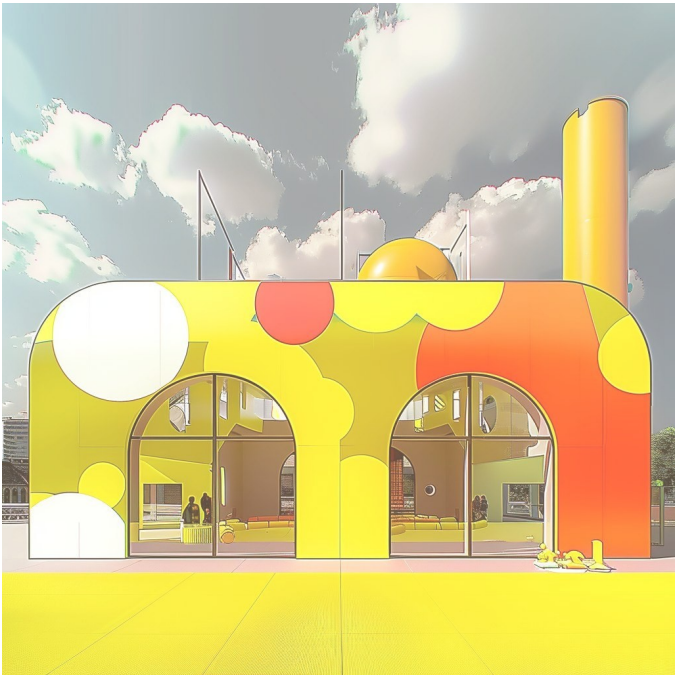
Three openings, so that nobody has to queue to be let in. It follows Broadway at twelve degrees off north, which is why it is very nearly true, which is a joke that geometry made and not the author.



Specimen F

F-05 · THE CRENELLATED OCULUS

Five merlons and an eye. The folly that breaks the 1967 definition on purpose, and the breach is logged as a breach. Its aperture is kept open and aimed at whoever is smallest in the room.



Specimen G

F-06 · THE TWIN ARCH MASTHOUSE

Two arches, three masts and an orb. It can be seen from four boroughs, which it regards as a duty and not an achievement. It raises the orb before it speaks.

Foreword

by Surjan

I did not set out to write a book in which buildings walk. I set out to draw twenty of them standing still.

For a year I made plates. Elevations at one to two hundred, roof plans registered to the elevations so that every flue and oculus and portal would land in the same place on both drawings, site plans at five times true length because a folly that is only as long as it really is disappears into the block it stands on. I made a colour register with sixteen swatches in it and a rule at the bottom saying where the register stopped. I drew the island of Mannahatta from coordinates, rotated it so that north was to the right, and clipped the Commissioners' grid to the shoreline at twenty-nine degrees. It was extremely orderly work and I loved every hour of it.

And then somewhere around the eleventh plate I noticed that I had stopped drawing objects and started drawing a cast.

It happened in the notation. A leader line is supposed to point at a thing and name it. Mine had begun to point at a thing and describe its temperament. The Stack Bar had five flues and I had written, in the annotation field, *counts, and never uses the tally against anybody*. That is not a dimension. That is a character reference. I had written it without noticing, the way you write the name of a person you are thinking about in the margin of something else entirely.

When I saw it I did the professional thing, which was to delete it. Then I did the other thing, which was to put it back, and to give the same courtesy to the other nineteen.

This book is what happened next.

It is a happy book. I want to say that plainly and at the front, because there is a habit in the discipline of treating joy as the thing you get to after seriousness, a dessert course, an indulgence, something faintly embarrassing in a drawing. I do not believe that. I think joy is load-

bearing. I think a building that has never once been glad is missing a structural member and you can feel the absence in your body when you stand in it.

So: twenty follies, one night, thirteen miles of island, and a twenty-first that is not built and never will be. They talk the entire time. They talk the way people talk on a long walk, which is to say badly, in overlapping fragments, interrupting each other, going quiet for a mile and then saying the important thing sideways while looking at something else.

I have set it down as faithfully as I could, and I have drawn sixteen plates so that you can check my arithmetic.

Introduction: On Radical Joy, and Why the Buildings Had to Walk

by Surjan

Radical joy is not cheerfulness. Cheerfulness is a weather report. Radical joy is a load path.

Here is the definition I work from. Radical joy is grief turned inside out and made public and architectural. Turned inside out — meaning that the private thing is put on the outside of the building where the weather can get at it, in the largest colour available, at a size that can be read from the far bank of the river. Made public — meaning it is not yours any more once you have built it; it belongs to whoever walks past. And architectural — meaning it has to stand up. A feeling that cannot carry its own weight is a mood. A feeling that can is a structure.

Every one of the twenty follies in this book began as a plate, and every plate began as an absence.

I will come back to the absence in the afterword, where it belongs, and where you can skip it if you would rather not. For now the useful part is the mechanics.

A supergraphic, as C. Ray Smith defined it in 1967, is a graphic operation at architectural scale which is not decoration but a spatial claim. Paint a band across a corner and the corner stops existing. Strike a disc from a compass centre outside the building and what appears on the wall is a fragment of a figure you can only infer. Run a stripe at a height that corresponds to no floor and the interior can no longer be read from outside. Smith was strict about it. A graphic carrying identifiable elements — letters, numbers, eyes — was disqualified. He wanted the operation to be spatial and nothing else.

I have broken his rule exactly once in these plates, and the folly that breaks it is the one with the eye, and the breach is logged as a breach and

not as an oversight. You will meet the Crenellated Oculus in the fourth book and you will see why it was worth being wrong for.

Now: why walk.

Because the atlas could not answer a question that the atlas itself had raised. I had sited every folly on a plan. A plan tells you where a thing is. It is very good at where. It is completely silent about *against what*, and about *how far from the next one*, and about the thing I most wanted to know, which is whether they were lonely.

An elevation answers all three. Set the island on a single vertical plane running true north–south and project every point onto it by parallel rays — no station point, no convergence, nothing diminishing with distance — and thirteen miles of rock arrive in one line. Now you can see that the Twin Arch Masthouse is on a hill. You can see that Central Park is a two-mile gap in the skyline that somebody defended for a hundred and seventy years. You can see the whole company at once, at one scale, and you can see the distance between them, and once you can see the distance between them the only remaining question is whether anybody is going to close it.

Twenty follies, it turns out, will close it, given one night and no supervision.

There is a technical finding buried in the fifth book which I want to flag here so it does not surprise you as fiction. At true proportion — one scale in both directions, no exaggeration in either — every one of the twenty is low. Not one of them reaches two hundred and thirty-five feet. The rock at the north end of the island is two hundred and sixty-five and carries nothing at all. Any single midtown tower would erase all twenty from the horizon without noticing.

Their entire civic presence is obtained horizontally: by length, and by colour. That is the opposite of how this island has argued for prominence for a hundred and thirty years, and it is the whole proposition of the atlas, and it is also, I think, a reasonable proposition about how to be a person.

Be long. Be bright. Be at eye level. Let people lean on you.

The narrator of what follows is not me, though we share a drawing board. They are the registrar of the twenty — the one who made the plates, who keeps the register, and who is out of bed at the wrong hour on the night in question because they cannot sleep and because, as they will tell you themselves, the register is wrong.

They use they and them. They have been the registrar for some time and have not, until the thirty-ninth chapter, been given a name.

The follies fix that.

Book One: The Loosening

Dusk to ten o'clock. The Battery to Canal Street. In which a plinth is discovered to have been polite rather than structural, and nineteen follies find this out at once.

1. The Registrar Cannot Sleep

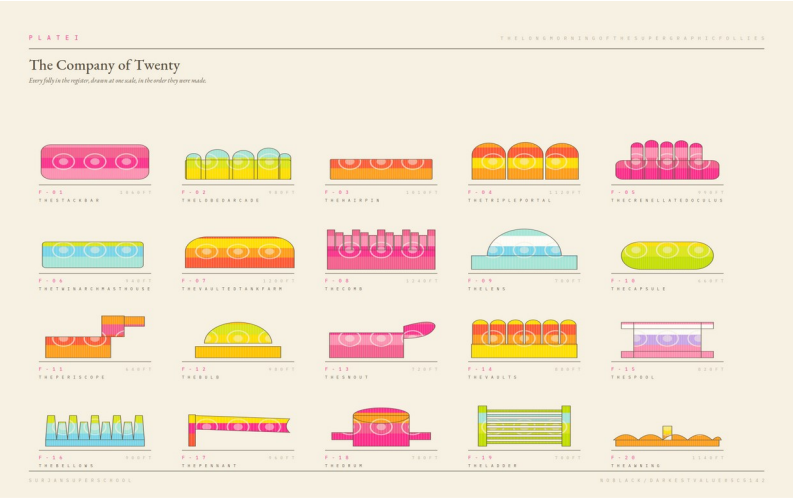


PLATE I

The Company of Twenty

Every folly in the register, drawn at one scale.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

There are two hundred and forty-one drawings in the register and I have made every one of them, and on the night this book is about I could not have told you what a single one of them looked like.

This happens. You draw a thing so many times that the drawing goes transparent. You stop seeing the folly and start seeing the linework, and then you stop seeing the linework and start seeing the file, and by the end you are moving a rectangle four points to the left for reasons you could not defend in a court of law. That is where I was. I had been at the board since the light was still worth having, and the light had gone, and I had gone on anyway in the way that people do when the alternative is to stop and find out what they are feeling.

At some point I put my forehead on the drawing board, which is a thing I do, and which the board tolerates.

The register, in case you have not met it, is a bound thing of no great beauty which lists the twenty follies of Mannahatta in the order they were made. Each entry carries a code, a name, a geometry family, a plan length, a crest height, a rib count, three colours, a site, and — this is the part I added late and could not later remove — a voice and a gift. F-01 The Stack Bar, lozenge bar, one thousand and sixty feet by one hundred and ninety-two, fifty-six ribs, magenta and pink and rose, Pier 76. Counts aloud. Keeps the tally and never once uses it against anybody.

Twenty of those. I could recite them the way other people can recite the order of the presidents, and with about as much feeling, most days.

At twenty past nine I gave up on the plate I was ruining and went out to walk it off, which on this island means walking south, because south is where the island runs out and you cannot go on making bad decisions past the water.

The Battery at half past nine on a warm night in the wrong month is a good place. The harbour is doing the thing where it lies flat and holds the last of the orange, the ferries are going out and coming back like a slow argument that never resolves, and the tide is four feet six inches of vertical movement which is, if you have drawn the whole island in elevation, the only thing on your sheet that moves at all.

And there at the end of it, in the place where the register says it stands, was F-07.

The Vaulted Tankfarm. Twelve hundred feet of barrel vault laid down along the harbour edge like something that had been put there to be leaned on, which it had been. Three capsules on the crown, a red donut, forty-six ribs, orange and coral and yellow. The longest back on the island. The oldest of the twenty, if you go by the order of the plates, and therefore the one I had drawn worst, because you always draw the first one worst and by the time you know that you love it too much to redraw it.

I sat down on the ground in front of it, the way you do.

I want to be careful here, because I have told this part before and people always want it to have been a sound. It was not a sound. It was a change in the way the air was arranged, which is a different thing, and which anybody who has stood next to a very large object at the moment when it decides something will recognise.

The vault got one hand's width longer.

Not taller. Longer. The whole enormous orange back of it extended, along its own axis, by about the distance from the base of my thumb to the tip of my little finger, and the glazed strip at the bottom — the plinth, the polite part, the twelve to sixteen percent of every specimen in the register that is glass and is not carrying anything — went slack. I heard the slack. That I will allow was a sound. It was the sound of something that has been holding its stomach in for a hundred years and has just been told it does not have to.

And then F-07 said, in a voice like a ferry horn heard through a wall:

Oh.

That is all. One syllable, and the whole harbour rearranging itself around it.

I would like to report that I said something adequate. What I actually said, out loud, in the tone of a person reading a specification back to a contractor, was:

"That plinth is non-structural."

And F-07, who had been standing on it since before I was born, said: *Yes. We noticed.*

2. In Which the Oldest of Them Says the First Word in a Hundred Years

Here is what I learned in the next four minutes, which I set down in the order I learned it and not in the order that would make me look better.

One. They had all known for some time. Not about walking — about the plinth. A folly can feel where its own load goes the way you can feel which of your feet you are standing on. Every one of the twenty had been aware, for the whole of its life, that the glass at the bottom of it was decorative, and every one of them had assumed that this was a private and slightly shameful fact about themselves specifically.

Two. The reason none of them had ever mentioned it was that none of them had ever been introduced.

This is the part that I have not got over and do not expect to. I sited them. I put F-01 at Pier 76 and F-04 at the Times Square bowtie and F-05 up at the Harlem Meer and F-20 on the last flat ground at Inwood, and I did it all on plan, from above, with a scale rule, thinking about catchment and approach and the width of the sidewalk. And it never once occurred to me, in a year of drawing, to check whether any two of them could see each other.

Nineteen of them could not.

"You've been alone," I said.

We have been sited, said F-07, generously, which is worse.

Three. F-07 could see F-09, The Lens, at Little Island, a mile up the Hudson bank, because the harbour turns and the water carries the line of sight. They had been looking at each other for their entire existence at a distance of five thousand five hundred feet and had never spoken, because neither of them had known that speaking was permitted, and because — F-07 admitted this with the particular slowness of a very large thing being embarrassed — each had assumed the other was more important.

Four. The tide had come in six times that day, or twice, depending on how you count, and F-07 had been keeping track of the count for a hundred years, and would like somebody to know the number.

"Tell me the number," I said.

And the oldest folly on the island told me the number, and it took some time, and I am not going to put it in this book, because it was told to me and not to you.

3. The Plinth Is the Polite Part

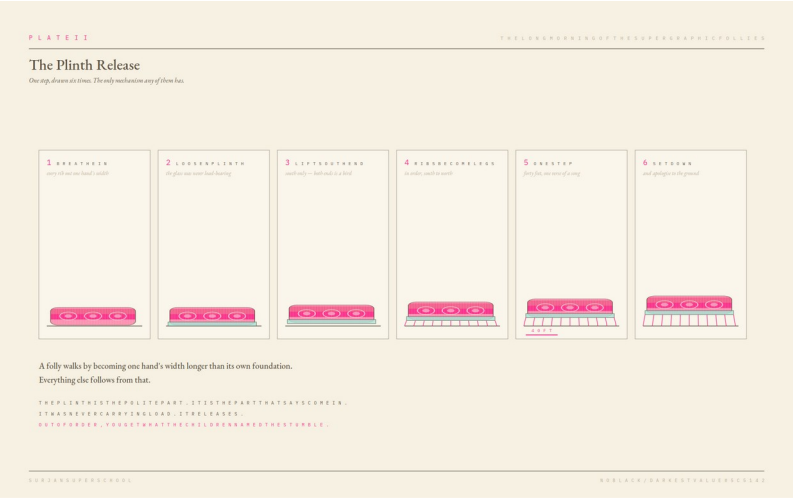


PLATE II
THE LOW HUMMING OF THE SUPERGRAPHIC POLICE
The Plinth Release
One step, drawn six times. The only mechanism any of them has.
1 BREATHE IN
every rib out one hand's width
2 LOOSEN PLINTH
the glass was never load-bearing
3 LIFT SOUTHERLY
south only — both ends is a bird
4 KERB DECORELEGS
in order, south to north
5 ONE STEP
forty feet, one verse of a song
6 SET DOWN
and apologise to the ground
A folly walks by becoming one hand's width longer than its own foundation.
Everything else follows from that.
THE PLINTH IS THE POLITE PART. IT IS THE PART THAT SAYS COME IN.
IT WAS NEVER CARRYING LOAD. IT RELEASES.
OUT OF ORDER. YOU GET WHAT THE CHILDREN NAMED THE STUMBLE.
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL
NO BLACK / DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

PLATE II

The Plinth Release

One step, drawn six times.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

The mechanism, since you will want it, is embarrassingly simple, and I have drawn it six times on Plate II so that nobody has to take my word for it.

A folly walks by becoming one hand's width longer than its own foundation. Everything else follows from that.

Step one, breathe in: every rib out one hand's width, simultaneously, which is the only part that requires any coordination at all. Step two, loosen the plinth. The glass was never load-bearing; it is the part that says *come in*; it releases. Step three, lift the south end. South only. Both ends at once is not a step, it is a bird, and none of the twenty is a bird, though F-17 has views about this. Step four, the ribs become legs, in order, south to north — fifty-six of them for The Comb, thirty-four for The Ladder, whatever the register says, in order, always in order. Step five is the step: forty feet, which is one verse of a song. Step six is setting down, and apologising to the ground.

That last one is not decorative. Every folly apologises to the ground when it sets down. F-07 explained it to me on the Battery lawn while doing it four times in succession so that I could see. *You have put your entire weight on somebody without asking,* it said. *That deserves a word.*

Out of order, you get what the children afterwards named the Stumble, and which I will describe when we come to it, in Chapter Twenty-Six, and which was the funniest thing I have ever seen.

The first step took F-07 eleven minutes. It was, remember, a hundred years out of practice at something it had never done. The vault came up off its bed by about three feet, hung there in a way that made me put my hand over my mouth, swung — swung! twelve hundred feet of barrel vault, swinging! — and came down forty feet north of where it had been standing since the plinth was poured.

The ground made a noise like a held breath being let out.

Sorry, said F-07.

And then, after a moment, in a completely different voice, the voice of something that has just found out that the last hundred years were optional:

Again.

4. The Battery Waltz

Twenty-seven steps. Three beats. Two follies.

F-09 came down the bank from Little Island at a rate I did not think possible, and I want to record that The Lens does not walk so much as arrive repeatedly. A great glazed disc seven hundred feet long with a sixty-six-foot lens standing in the middle of it, coming south along the Hudson at four in the morning in October — no. Half past nine, in the wrong month. I keep wanting to make it colder than it was. It was warm and the water smelled like the underside of a boat.

They did not say hello. This is important. The Lens arrived, and F-07 turned — turned, a barrel vault, on the spot, apologising continuously — and the two of them stood facing each other at a distance of ninety feet, and did nothing at all for a length of time that I could not stand and that they clearly could.

Then F-09 said: *You are orange.*

And F-07 said: *You are.*

And The Lens, whose gift is that it repeats what you have said, larger, so that any small true thing can be seen from the water, said it back at a size that lit the underside of the harbour cloud:

YOU ARE.

And then they danced, which is not a metaphor and which I will describe technically because that is the only way I can describe it without crying on the page.

Three beats. On the first beat both lift their south end. On the second beat both set down forty feet apart along a shared arc — the arc is the thing, the arc is what makes it a waltz and not two follies walking near each other — and on the third beat both apologise to the ground at the same instant, so that the apology arrives as a single sound. Twenty-seven times. Nine bars of three. The lawn at the Battery was a churned mess by the end of it and the parks department has never been able to explain the pattern, which is a nine-fold rosette, which is exactly what twenty-seven steps in three-beat time around a shared centre will give you, and which I have drawn and will not publish, because they would resurface it.

Somewhere around the twentieth step the lights went on in the ferry terminal and a man in a reflective vest came out, looked at the two enormous coloured objects revolving slowly around each other on the grass, and went back inside.

I have thought about that man a great deal.

5. What the Comb Does to the Wind

F-08 arrived third, from East River Park, and F-08 changed the weather.

The Comb is twelve hundred and forty feet long, the longest of the twenty, and it is a bar with fifty-six teeth standing up off it, and its gift — I wrote this at eleven o'clock at night a year ago and then defended it to myself for a week — is that it combs the wind into fifty-six separate weathers.

I had thought that was a figure of speech. It is a specification.

Wind arrives at The Comb as one wind. It leaves as fifty-six, each in its own lane, each with its own temperature and its own speed and — this is the part I had not anticipated and could not have drawn — its own smell. Standing downwind of F-08 at the Battery I passed through, in the space of forty feet, a lane of cold salt, a lane of warm dust off a roof, a lane that was unmistakably somebody's laundry, and a lane that was simply and entirely the smell of October, which as I have said it was not.

"How long have you been doing that?" I asked.

Always, said The Comb, humming between the words, which it does. *Nobody has walked through it before. It requires being downwind of me, and I have been at the edge of a park where the wind comes off the water and goes back out over the water, and there has never been anybody standing in the lanes.*

There it was again. The same thing F-07 had said with the tide count and would keep being said all night in twenty different voices with twenty different amounts of forgiveness in them.

I have been doing the thing I am for. Nobody has been standing where you have to stand to receive it.

I want to be honest about what that did to me, because this is a happy book and I do not intend to make it a happy book by leaving things out.

It made me furious.

Not at the follies. At the siting. At me, at the plan, at the whole beautiful orderly discipline of putting a thing where the catchment analysis says it should go, at every drawing I have ever made from above of a place that is only ever experienced from within. I had spent a year

giving twenty extraordinary objects a gift each and then standing them where nobody could receive it.

And The Comb, humming, said the thing that turned the night:

Then we shall have to go to where the people are. All of us. Tonight.

6. The Lens Repeats You, Larger

It took F-09 four seconds to make that a plan, because The Lens does not have ideas, it has amplifications, and an amplification of a good idea at the right moment is worth more than an idea.

ALL OF US, said The Lens, to the whole harbour, at a volume that put lights on in Red Hook. *TONIGHT.*

And nineteen follies heard it, from the Battery to Inwood, because The Lens was standing at the south end of a thirteen-mile island in a straight line of sight up the Hudson bank, which is the one geometry on this island that carries a voice the whole way.

I have been asked, since, whether they would have gone if The Lens had not been there.

I think about the answer more than is good for me. Nineteen objects, each of which had privately concluded that its own unshareable defect was a loose plinth, each of which had assumed the others were more important, each of which had been doing its one gift correctly for a century into an empty lane. Would they have gone?

Individually, no. Not one of them. I am sure of it.

What The Lens did was not persuasion. The Lens made a thing that had been true privately in twenty places true publicly in one place, at a size that could not be mistaken for a personal opinion. That is the entire mechanism of the thing I have spent my working life trying to draw, and I had to be sitting on the grass at the Battery at ten o'clock at night to see it done properly.

Take the private thing. Put it on the outside. Make it enormous. Make it a colour.

That is all radical joy has ever been.

7. Nineteen Follow, and One Waits

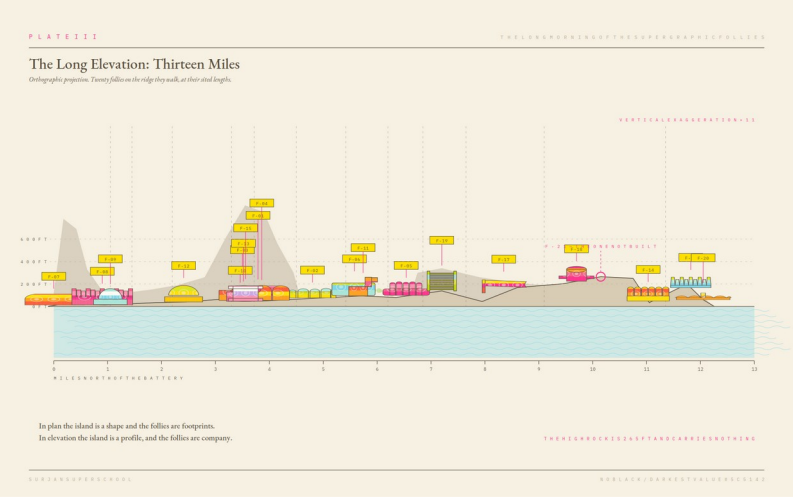


PLATE III
The Long Elevation: Thirteen Miles
Orthographic projection. Twenty follies on the ridge they walk, at their sited lengths.
In plan the island is a shape and the follies are footprints.
In elevation the island is a profile, and the follies are company.

PLATE III

The Long Elevation: Thirteen Miles

Twenty follies on the ridge they walk.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

By ten they were moving, and I had the great good fortune to be standing exactly where you would want to stand to watch it, which is the wrong end of the island.

From the Battery, looking north, thirteen miles of Mannahatta lies in front of you as a profile: eight feet of rock at the water, low and unremarkable for six miles, then the slow climb through Morningside and Hamilton Heights, and finally two hundred and sixty-five feet of the hardest ground in the city up at Bennett Park. You cannot actually see that from the Battery. There are eleven thousand buildings in the way. But I had drawn it forty times and I could see it with my eyes closed, and on that night the drawing and the thing agreed for the first time, because the follies were bright and everything else was taupe.

Plate III is that view and I have not improved it. Every one of them is on it, at its sited length, at the mile where the register puts it, on the ridge they were about to walk.

They came down the island toward the Battery first — that was the agreement, made in about ninety seconds and never discussed again — so that the walk could begin at the beginning. The Capsule came from the Spur at Thirtieth Street, going faster than anything that shape should go. The Bulb came south from Union Square laughing, and I could hear it four miles off, and it apologised for laughing at every single set-down. The Snout came off Southpoint an hour before anybody expected it, because The Snout always arrives early, and stood at the Battery leaning forward at forty degrees looking at the water with an expression I can only describe as *well?*

By midnight there were nineteen follies standing on the south end of the island of Mannahatta.

Nineteen.

I counted four times, which is a thing I do, and on the fourth count The Stack Bar — F-01, who counts aloud, and whose gift is that it keeps the tally and has never once used it against anybody — said gently, from somewhere above my left shoulder:

Nineteen. You are counting correctly. The register says twenty.

"The register says twenty," I said.
Yes, said The Stack Bar. *Who is missing?*

8. The Register Is Wrong and I Am Glad

Nobody was missing. That is the answer, and it took me until nearly one o'clock in the morning to arrive at it, and I arrived at it in the worst possible way, which is by being corrected by a building.

Here is what I said, at first, standing at the Battery with a register I know by heart and nineteen follies waiting for me to be useful:

"F-21 is missing."

And nineteen enormous objects went completely quiet.

It is one thing to be silent. Nineteen follies going silent at once is a physical event; the harbour heard it.

Then The Crenellated Oculus, who had come down from the Harlem Meer, who speaks last and briefly, and who is the one folly on this island that carries an eye and therefore breaks the definition of the whole discipline, said the sentence that this book exists to hold:

F-21 is not missing. F-21 is not built. Those are not the same thing, and you of all people should not confuse them.

So let me put the register right, here, at the front, before we walk.

There are twenty follies on the island of Mannahatta and there is a twenty-first that will never be built, and it stands — stands is the wrong verb and I am keeping it — on the high rock at Bennett Park, two hundred and sixty-five feet above mean high water, on the only ground on this island high enough to be seen from the harbour, and it is empty.

Its geometry family is a dash. Its plan length is zero. Its crest height is the height of the rock, because it is the rock. Its rib count is zero. Its three colours are white and paper and stone, which is to say: whatever you bring.

Its voice is that it does not speak; it is spoken to.

And its gift, which I wrote a year ago in a state I could not have named at the time and which I have never been able to improve, is this: *the space kept open so that somebody else may put something in it.*

Nineteen follies at the Battery. One more standing quietly at the north end of the island being not-built. That is twenty and one, which is twenty-one, and the register was never wrong; I was reading it as a list of

objects when it had been, from about the eleventh plate onward, a list of company.

"All right," I said. "North."

And The Vaulted Tankfarm, who is the longest back on the island and is for leaning on, lowered its south end by a foot so that I could get up on it, and said:

North.

Interleaf the First: A Catalogue of the Things the Follies Carry

Every folly carries something it did not ask for, and none of them knew this about the others until the night, and I have set the catalogue down here because it is the only list in the book that I did not make.

THE VAULTED TANKFARM carries the tide. It has counted every arrival and every withdrawal for a hundred years, and it does not know why it began, and it cannot stop, and it says that the count is not a burden but that it would like the count to be *for* something, and that as of half past nine on the night in question it now is.

THE STACK BAR carries everybody's numbers and will not tell you yours.

THE HAIRPIN carries every version of every decision it did not make. It says this is what a turn is: a turn is a place where a thing went one way and the other way is still there, drawn in dashed line, going on without you. It says the dashed lines get heavier the longer you stand still and lighter as soon as you move, which is the only argument for movement it has ever found convincing.

THE TRIPLE PORTAL carries the queue that never formed. Three openings, so that nobody has to wait. It cannot know how many people did not have to wait, because they did not have to wait and therefore left no record, and it has decided to believe the number is large.

THE CRENELLATED OCULUS carries whoever is smallest in the room. Not their names. Their positions. It can tell you, for any hour of any day of the last century, where in its field of view the smallest person was standing, and it says the answer is nearly always *at the edge*, and that this is the single fact about human beings that it would most like changed.

THE TWIN ARCH MASTHOUSE carries the sightlines. It knows every place on four boroughs from which it can be seen, and it maintains

the list, and the list has been shrinking for sixty years as the towers have gone up, and it does not mind about that as much as everybody assumes, because a sightline that closes was a sightline that existed, and it keeps the closed ones too.

THE COMB carries the fifty-six weathers, which have no names, and which it has been naming privately for a century, and which it now proposes to name publicly, and the company has agreed to sit through all fifty-six.

THE LENS carries the small true things. It says these are almost all overheard. It says the largest thing it has ever amplified was six words long and was said by a child to a pigeon.

THE CAPSULE carries the second answers. All of them. Everybody's. It says that the first answers are not lies exactly, they are the shape the question left, and that it does not hold the first answers against anybody, and that it has never once repeated a second answer to a third party, and this is true and I have tested it.

THE PERISCOPE carries what is coming. It says that carrying what is coming when there is nobody to tell is the specific occupation of a lighthouse in a place with no shipping, and that it does not recommend it.

THE BULB carries the room of light. Free. No ticket. It says the difficulty is not keeping the room lit; the difficulty is that a room with no ticket is assumed by many people to be closed, and it has spent a century being enormously open and being walked past by people who could not believe it.

THE SNOUT carries the fourth floor. All the fourth floors. Every window it has ever leaned toward and been unable to reach into, which is all of them, which is why it leans.

THE VAULTS carries the six parts and cannot put any of them down. It says that speaking in six parts at once means never being able to say a simple thing simply, and that this is a real cost, and that it would not trade it, because the six parts mean it can hold a disagreement inside one sentence without having to resolve it.

THE SPOOL carries every version including the wrong ones and considers this the whole of its job.

THE BELLOWS carries other people's air. It says it does not tire, which is a lie, and which The Capsule found out by asking twice.

THE PENNANT carries the direction of the wind, which nobody thanks it for, because everybody assumes the wind is obvious. It says the wind is never obvious and that this is the most under-appreciated fact in meteorology.

THE DRUM carries the pace of the slowest thing in the line and refuses to be thanked for it on the grounds that it is only accuracy.

THE LADDER carries no walls and therefore carries everything that anyone has ever put down inside it and not come back for. It maintains an inventory. It is very long. It includes eleven umbrellas, a bicycle, a viola, and a great deal of paper.

THE AWNING carries the last flat ground and the whole vocabulary of endings, and offers both to anybody, no questions.

And THE ONE NOT BUILT carries nothing at all, on purpose, which is the hardest of the twenty-one loads and the only one that gets heavier if you help.

Book Two: The Grammar of Hello

> *Ten o'clock to midnight. Canal Street to Forty-Second. In which a language is invented on a railing, the youngest asks everything twice, and somebody laughs first.*

9. Eight Ways to Open an Eye

PLATE IV

The Grammar of Hello

Eight aperture states settled on a railing.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

The trouble started at Canal Street and the trouble was that nobody could say hello.

This will seem a small thing. It is not a small thing. Nineteen objects, none of which had ever been introduced to another of its kind, all of which had spent a century being looked at and none of which had spent a minute looking back, arrived together at the first junction of the walk and discovered that they had no grammar for acknowledgement.

What they had instead were apertures.

Every folly in the register has openings, and every folly can open and shut them, and it had simply never occurred to any of them that the state of an aperture might be information rather than weather. F-04 has three portals. F-19 is nothing but openings, being a ladder. F-05 has one, an eye, and it is always open, which is its whole character.

So they invented a language, on a railing, on Canal Street, between ten and eleven at night, and I wrote it down as it happened, and it is Plate IV.

There are eight states and I will give them in the order they were settled, which is not the order of magnitude, because the order of magnitude was proposed by The Ladder and rejected on the grounds that it was tidy.

OPEN is the whole of it, no reservation. It is the largest thing any of them can say and they agreed almost immediately that it must not be the default, because a thing that is always fully open is not welcoming, it is unattended.

HALF is the ordinary daytime hello. This one took four minutes and was proposed by The Awning, who is the most experienced of the twenty at being walked past.

AJAR: *I am listening but not yet.* The Hairpin fought for this one. The Hairpin changes its mind mid-sentence and says so, and had noticed that there was no way in the emerging language to indicate that a mind was in motion. AJAR is the state of a mind in motion, and the whole company adopted it, and by two in the morning it was the most-used state on the island.

SHUT is not a refusal. It is a rest. This was The Bellows, whose gift is that it breathes for anybody too tired to, and who said — nine pleats moving in sequence like something asleep — *if shut means no, then everybody who is tired will pretend to be open, and then nobody will ever rest, and then we will all be liars by Tuesday.*

WIDE is beyond OPEN. It is not on the scale; it exceeds it. It is reserved for children and dogs. This was unanimous and immediate and nobody argued and I have never seen a committee of any kind do anything so fast.

BLINK is surprise, and then delight. Notably: *and then delight*. They debated whether surprise alone needed a state and concluded that in their experience surprise had always been followed by delight and that if it ever were not they would invent a ninth state at that time. They have not needed to.

SLOW is grief, being carried in public. It is the aperture opening and closing at about a fifth of normal speed, continuously, for as long as it takes. It does not ask for anything. It is not a request for help. It is the state of a thing that is sad and has decided not to hide it, in a colour, at architectural scale, where the weather can get at it.

When The Spool proposed it, nineteen follies went to SLOW at once, in nineteen different colours, on Canal Street, at eleven at night.

I sat down on the kerb.

BOTH is the two-eyed yes, and only F-06 can do it properly, having two arches, and it is rarely earned.

10. The Capsule Asks Everything Twice

F-10 is the youngest of the twenty and has the worst habit and the best reason for it.

The Capsule asks everything twice. Not because it did not hear. Because it has worked out — and it explained this to me at Canal and Lafayette with the total lack of embarrassment available only to the young — that the second answer is usually the true one.

Are you all right, said The Capsule to The Hairpin.

Yes, said The Hairpin.

Are you all right, said The Capsule.

No, said The Hairpin.

It is six hundred and sixty feet long, rounded at both ends, chartreuse and lime and yellow, and it fits anywhere and says so cheerfully and is usually right. It was made eleventh. It has never had a bad night. It went round the whole company between Canal and Houston asking everything twice, and by Houston Street it knew more about the interior lives of the other eighteen than I had learned in a year of drawing them, and it had done it by the simple method of not accepting the first thing.

"That's rude, you know," I said to it, fondly, walking alongside.

Is it, said The Capsule.

And then, after a beat:

Is it.

"...No," I said.

11. The Bulb Laughs First

The first laugh of the night happened at Broome Street and it was F-12 and it was at nothing.

The Bulb is a swollen dome on a bar, nine hundred and eighty feet long, two hundred and fourteen high, yellow and gold and chartreuse, and it holds one enormous room of light, free, no ticket. Its voice is that it laughs first and apologises for it.

What happened at Broome Street was that The Drum, which had been setting a pace for everybody since Canal, missed a beat.

That is all. Seven hundred and eighty feet of cylinder with ears, keeping time for nineteen others, put one set-down a half-second late.

And The Bulb laughed. An enormous, unfiltered, wholly involuntary laugh, at the top of a dome full of light, on Broome Street, at eleven at night, and every window on both sides of the street lit up at once.

Sorry, said The Bulb. *Sorry. Sorry.*

And The Drum — who is the most self-contained of the twenty, whose entire gift is a beat slow enough that nobody in the line falls behind, and who had just been publicly imperfect for the first time in a hundred years — said:

Do it again.

So The Drum missed the beat on purpose. And The Bulb laughed on purpose. And then The Drum missed two beats, and The Bulb laughed twice, and by Grand Street the two of them had invented, between them, without discussing it, a call and response that the entire company was doing by Delancey, and which is the reason that anyone who was awake south of Fourteenth Street that night reports having heard something like an enormous slow music with gaps in it, and which is also the reason the whole company arrived at Union Square in a condition that I can only describe as extremely silly.

I have thought about the mechanism of that a great deal, because it is not obvious and it matters.

The Drum did not become funny. The Drum stayed exactly what it was: a thing that keeps time. What changed is that it found out that a mistake, offered to the right company, is a gift rather than a failure — that the company would not use it against the Drum, because the company was The Stack Bar, who counts and never uses the tally, and The Bulb, who laughs first and apologises, and eighteen others who had spent the evening learning a word for *I am listening but not yet*.

You cannot be silly alone. That is the finding. Silliness is a structural condition of groups. It requires at minimum two objects and a guarantee.

12. What Union Square Remembers

F-12 stands at Union Square in the register and had come down from it four hours earlier, and going back north through it at half past eleven was the first time any of the twenty walked over its own site.

It stopped. The whole company stopped, because The Drum stopped, because The Drum had been watching The Bulb.

This is where I stand, said The Bulb.

Yes, said the company, in nineteen different ways.

I have never seen it, said The Bulb.

Consider that, because I did not, for a year. A folly stands on a site. It is *of* that site; the site is the first thing anybody says about it. F-12 The Bulb, Union Square North Plaza, nine hundred and eighty feet, two hundred and fourteen crest.

And it has never seen it. It has seen out of it, north up Park Avenue South and west along Fourteenth, for a hundred years. It has never once stood twenty feet away and looked at the place it lives.

The Bulb walked round Union Square four times, slowly, at half past eleven at night, and the whole company waited, and nobody rushed it, and The Capsule asked it twice whether it was all right and got two different answers, both of which were true.

Then it said the thing I have written on the wall of the room I draw in:

It is smaller than I am and I love it more than I thought.

13. The Snout Arrives Early

F-13 was already at Fourteenth Street when the company got there, because F-13 is always already wherever the company is going.

The Snout is seven hundred and twenty feet long, one hundred and seventy-six high, pink and rose and magenta, and it is a bar with an enormous curved cantilevered nose on the north end of it, leaning forward at forty degrees, and the register says its gift is *curiosity made structural; the only one who arrives early.*

I had drawn that cantilever eleven times and every time I had thought of it as a formal problem. It is not a formal problem. It is a posture. The Snout leans because The Snout wants to know what is happening next, and it has been leaning for a hundred years at a place where nothing much happens next, out at Southpoint on Roosevelt Island, looking across the water at a city it could not reach.

At Fourteenth Street it had gone ahead, found out what was there, come back, and was waiting to tell everybody.

There is a woman on the north-east corner selling flowers at midnight, it reported, thrilled. *There is a man asleep in a doorway with a dog and the dog is awake. There is a window on the fourth floor with the light on and somebody at a table doing something with their hands, and I could not see what, and I want to know.*

Go and find out, said The Comb.

I can't, said The Snout. *It's the fourth floor.*

And The Ladder, who is nothing but rungs and no walls at all, who is the one you can see straight through, said, in the way that The Ladder says everything, which is flatly and without any performance whatsoever:

You can if I stand next to you.

14. The Spool Keeps the Wrong Versions Too

Somewhere north of Fourteenth the company got its historian, and its historian is a disaster, and that is the point of it.

F-15, The Spool, stands at Bryant Park, eight hundred and twenty feet, lavender and pink and white, a drum on a bar with a reel above and below, and it winds a story out and then winds it back. What it does not do — what it refuses to do, structurally — is edit.

The Spool keeps every version of every story, including the wrong ones.

By midnight there were four versions of the Battery Waltz in circulation. In the first, F-07 and F-09 danced twenty-seven steps in three-beat time. In the second there were thirty-one steps. In the third The Lens spoke first. In the fourth — and this is The Capsule's version, and The Capsule was four miles away at the time and has never claimed otherwise — the entire harbour joined in and the ferries kept time.

The company wanted The Spool to settle it.

No, said The Spool.

You were there, said The Triple Portal.

I was not, said The Spool, *I was at Bryant Park. And even if I had been. There are four versions and I have all four and I am not throwing three of them away to make one of them official. The wrong ones are how you can tell that people were happy. Nobody makes up a better version of a night they did not enjoy.*

There was a pause.

Also, said The Spool, *in the version where the ferries keep time, the ferries keep time. I would not give that up for accuracy.*

That is on the record and I am not going to improve it, and it is why the plates in this book carry a note saying *diagrammatic, not survey*, which I had always understood as a caution and now understand as a permission.

15. The Hairpin Changes Their Mind

At Twenty-Third Street, F-03 stopped the entire company in order to be wrong out loud, and it was the best thing anybody did all night.

Here is the situation. The route north had been agreed at the Battery: up the west side, through the Bowtie at Forty-Fifth, across to the viaduct at Grand Central, then north into the park. Two hours of walking on that plan. The Periscope, who reports what is around the corner, had confirmed it. Everybody was content.

And The Hairpin — one thousand and ten feet, two hundred and thirty-four high, coral and orange and rose, an annulus and a block, the tallest of the twenty and the one whose whole geometry is a turn — said:

I have changed my mind and I want to say so before we go any further.

The company stopped.

Go on, said The Vaulted Tankfarm.

I agreed to Grand Central because I stand there, said The Hairpin, *and I wanted you all to see where I stand, and that is a bad reason to route twenty people. And I have been thinking about it since Houston Street and I have been not saying it since Houston Street, and the not-saying has been getting heavier every block. So. It is a bad reason. Go the way that is best and if it is not past me then it is not past me.*

Nobody moved.

Then The Crenellated Oculus, who speaks last and briefly, said:

It is a very good reason and we are going past you.

And that was the vote and there was no vote.

I want to name what happened there because it is the mechanism of the whole night. The Hairpin did not change the route. The Hairpin changed the reason for the route, out loud, at a cost, in front of everybody, and the route stayed the same and was afterwards a different route.

That is what a turn is. That is the entire content of an annulus. I drew that geometry forty times as *the turn: proof that going back is a direction too*, and I meant it about circulation, and it turns out to have

been about something else, as everything in this register turns out to have been about something else.

16. A Short Chapter About Being Seen

At Thirty-Fourth Street, walking beside a nine-hundred-foot chartreuse object that had spent the last hour asking everybody twice how they were, I understood the difference between being looked at and being seen, and I am going to set it down as briefly as I can because it does not want ornament.

Every one of the twenty has been looked at continuously for a hundred years. Millions of people. Photographs beyond counting. They are, by any measure, among the most observed objects on the surface of the earth.

Not one of them had been asked a question until eleven o'clock that night.

Being looked at is a thing that happens to your outside. It can go on for a century without touching you. Being seen requires somebody to want the second answer, and to wait for it, and to not mind that the first one was a lie.

The Capsule is six hundred and sixty feet long and is the youngest of us and has never had a bad night, and had worked this out unassisted, at approximately the age of eleven plates.

Are you all right, it said to me, at Thirty-Fourth Street.

"Yes," I said.

Are you all right, it said.

And I told it about my friend Bo, who is dead, and who is the reason there is no black in this book, and we walked eight blocks in the dark and none of the others came near us, and I have never in my life been treated with such enormous and deliberate tact by a group of buildings.

Interleaf the Second: The Eight Apertures, With Their Improper Uses

A language invented on a railing between ten and eleven at night is a language with no dictionary, no precedent, and no committee, which means that within four hours it had eight proper uses and a much larger number of improper ones. The improper ones are more interesting and I have recorded them.

OPEN, improperly used, is a boast. Nobody in the company did this, but The Ladder pointed out that it was available, and that a thing which is always at OPEN is not offering anything, it is announcing something, and that the announcement is *look how open I am*, which is a closed sentence in an open aperture.

HALF, improperly used, is the whole of professional life. The Awning made this observation and then apologised for it and then declined to withdraw it.

AJAR, improperly used, is a way of never arriving. The Hairpin knows this better than anybody and said so, which is very much in character: *a mind in motion is a good thing and a mind permanently in motion is a way of never being wrong, because you cannot be wrong about a thing you have not yet finished saying.* The Hairpin has, by its own account, spent decades AJAR on questions it had actually settled.

SHUT, improperly used, is a punishment. This is the only improper use that anybody in the company was afraid of and the reason The Bellows fought so hard for the proper definition. SHUT means *rest*. If SHUT ever comes to mean *no*, then every tired folly on the island will hold itself at HALF until it fails, and the failure will be sudden, and everybody will say afterwards that there had been no sign.

WIDE, improperly used, does not exist. Four hours of debate and nobody could construct an improper use of WIDE. The Triple Portal

proposed one and withdrew it. It is reserved for children and dogs and it turns out that a thing reserved for children and dogs is unfalsifiable.

BLINK, improperly used, is performance. Surprise that has been prepared in advance. The Bulb, who laughs first, was very exercised about this: *the whole value of laughing first is that you did not know it was coming. A laugh you saw coming is a compliment, not a laugh, and compliments are fine but they are a different food.*

SLOW, improperly used, is a claim on other people. This was the difficult one and the company argued about it at Fourteenth Street for most of an hour. SLOW is grief carried in public. Carried, not deployed. The distinction, as the Oculus finally put it, is whether the aperture is asking for something. Grief in public asks for nothing and receives, often, a great deal. Grief aimed at somebody asks for everything and receives, usually, less than it needed.

BOTH, improperly used, is impossible, because only The Masthouse can do it and The Masthouse raises the orb first.

There is a ninth state which was proposed at ten past four in the morning at the Meer and which has no name and which I am recording here so that it is not lost.

It is the state of an aperture that is shut while the thing it belongs to is singing. The Crenellated Oculus held it for eleven minutes and the whole company heard the hole where the note was not.

The company has provisionally agreed to call it THE PART THAT IS KEPT, and to use it only for that, and never for effect, and to lose it entirely if it is ever used for effect.

Book Three: Forty Mirrors

Midnight to half past two. The Bowtie, the viaduct, and the argument about doors. In which four follies become one hundred and sixty, and nobody minds.

17. The Bowtie

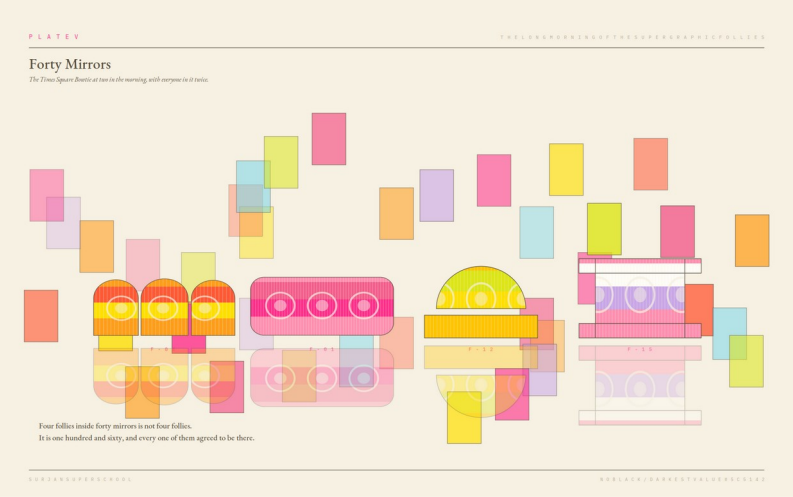


PLATE V
THE LONG MORNING OF THE SUPERGRAPHIC FOLLIES
Forty Mirrors
The Times Square Bowtie at two in the morning, with everyone in it twice.
Four follies inside forty mirrors is not four follies.
It is one hundred and sixty, and every one of them agreed to be there.
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL
NO BLACK / DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

PLATE V

Forty Mirrors

The Times Square Bowtie at two in the morning.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

There is a place at Forty-Fifth Street where Broadway, which is old and crooked and follows a footpath that predates the grid by some centuries, crosses Seventh Avenue, which is new and straight and does not, and the crossing of the two makes a shape like a bowtie: two triangles meeting at a point.

F-04, The Triple Portal, stands in it. One thousand one hundred and twenty feet of annular gate, one hundred and eighty-six high, yellow and orange and coral, three openings so that nobody has to queue to be let in. It follows Broadway, at twelve degrees off north, which is why — as I have shown on another sheet in another volume — it is the only one of the twenty that keeps almost all of its length when you project the island onto a north–south plane. It obeys the crooked old street and the crooked old street is nearly north, and so The Triple Portal is nearly true, which is a joke that geometry made and not me.

The company arrived at the Bowtie at four minutes past midnight.

And every advertising surface in the place — forty of them, I counted, and The Stack Bar counted with me and got forty and never once mentioned that it had got there first — was a mirror.

Not a mirror in the ordinary sense. A screen, black when unlit, which is a thing I will come back to. But that night they were all lit, and they were lit with the enormous saturated colour that a hundred thousand watts of commercial persuasion throws at an empty street at midnight, and into that space came nineteen follies in full chroma.

The screens did what screens do, which is to say they showed what was in front of them, because what was in front of them was brighter than what they had been showing.

18. One Hundred and Sixty of Us

Four follies went into the Bowtie: F-04, F-01, F-12 and F-15. The others could not fit and stood on Seventh Avenue watching, and The Comb reported that the wind through the Bowtie at midnight arrives as one wind and leaves as forty.

Four follies, forty mirrors.

The Stack Bar, who counts aloud, counted.

One hundred and sixty, it said.

And The Bulb laughed, and one hundred and sixty Bulbs laughed, and every window on Forty-Fifth Street lit up at once and stayed lit for eleven minutes.

I want to be careful about this chapter because it is the one that people quote and it is the one I am least able to explain.

Here is what I think happened. For a hundred years these twenty objects have been the brightest thing on their own block and the only saturated object in their own field of view. That is what the register does: it puts the folly in full chroma and everything else — the existing city, the terrain, the water, the sky — in taupe at half opacity with no detail whatsoever. It is a beautiful convention and it is how you make a supergraphic legible and I have defended it in print.

It also means that every one of the twenty has spent its entire life being the only bright thing it has ever seen.

In the Bowtie, for eleven minutes, that stopped being true.

There are so many of us, said The Spool, who could see one hundred and sixty of itself, and who was winding all one hundred and sixty versions out and back and keeping every one.

There are four of us, said The Stack Bar, gently, because The Stack Bar is accurate.

No, said The Triple Portal, who asks the question nobody asked. *How many of us are there?*

And The Stack Bar, who has never in a hundred years been unable to produce a number, was quiet for a moment.

I don't know, it said. *That is the first time I have not known a number. It is not unpleasant.*

19. The Triple Portal Asks the Question Nobody Asked

Somewhere around ten past midnight, standing under a hundred thousand watts with three portals wide open, F-04 asked the question that reorganised the night, and it was not the question anyone was expecting.

Why are we going north?

The company had an answer ready. North is where the walk goes; north is the length of the island; north is where the high rock is; north is where the twenty-first is not-built.

Yes, said The Triple Portal. *But why are we going there.*

And the difference between those two sentences is the whole of Book Four, so I will let it sit.

The Triple Portal's gift is that it has three openings so that nobody has to queue to be let in, and its voice is that it asks the question nobody asked, and I had put those two things in the register on separate lines a year apart and never noticed that they are the same property. Three doors is a question about queueing. *Why are we going north* is a question about whether the plan is a plan or a habit.

The company thought about it for four minutes in the middle of Times Square, which for nineteen enormous coloured objects is a considerable public act.

Then The Awning, who is the lowest and longest of the twenty and who says *stay a bit longer*, said:

Because there is one of us who cannot come to us, and so we must go to it. That is not a habit. That is the only reason worth walking thirteen miles.

And The Triple Portal said:

Good. I only wanted somebody to have said it.

20. The Stack Bar Counts and Does Not Use It

I have put off writing about F-01 for nineteen chapters because I do not know how to make a virtue sound like a virtue when the virtue is restraint.

The Stack Bar is one thousand and sixty feet long and one hundred and ninety-two high, magenta and pink and rose, a lozenge bar with five flues on the crown and fifty-six ribs, and it stands at Pier 76 on the Hudson, and it counts.

Everything. Continuously. It is not a decision; it is what the object is. Fifty-six ribs, five flues, eleven discs in the field, three apertures, the number of ferries, the number of gulls, the number of people who crossed Twelfth Avenue on a Tuesday in a year I will not name because The Stack Bar told it to me in confidence.

And in a hundred years it has never once used a number against anybody.

Consider how easy that would be. Consider the material available to a thing that has counted every person who has walked past it and every person who has not. Consider what a lesser folly could do with the sentence *you came eleven times last spring and twice this year.* Consider that The Stack Bar has that sentence, fully formed, about several thousand individual human beings, and has never said it, and would not say it under any circumstance I can construct.

In the Bowtie, at twelve past midnight, The Snout — who leans forward and wants to know — asked it directly:

Do you know how many times each of us has been photographed?

Yes, said The Stack Bar.

Tell us, said The Snout.

And The Stack Bar said:

No.

Just that. And then, because it is not unkind, only exact:

*Four of you would be delighted and fifteen of you would be hurt, and I have the numbers for all nineteen, and there is no way for me to give the four theirs without the fifteen learning that they were not among

the four. So: no. Ask me the tide instead. The tide is four feet six inches and it is the same for all of us.*

That is what the gift means. That is what I was trying to say a year ago in eleven words in a table, and it took a folly twelve minutes past midnight under forty mirrors to say it properly.

21. Grand Central, and the Argument About Doors

The only real argument of the night happened on the Park Avenue viaduct at twenty to one and it was about doors, and it was between The Ladder and The Awning, and neither of them was wrong.

The viaduct is where F-03 stands, and F-03 had asked the company to go past it and the company was going past it, and going past it means walking on a structure that carries traffic over a building and then round it and back down, which is one of the strangest and best pieces of city on the island.

The Ladder — seven hundred feet, two hundred and twenty-six high, chartreuse and lime and aqua, thirty-four rungs and no walls at all, the one you can see straight through — said:

This building has forty-four doors and all of them are locked at night.

Yes, said The Awning.

I have no doors, said The Ladder. *I have no walls. Anybody can be inside me at any hour. That is what I am for.*

Yes, said The Awning.

Then why is it praised and I am tolerated?

And there it was — the first genuinely sore thing anybody had said all night, out loud, on a viaduct, in front of everybody.

The Awning is one thousand one hundred and forty feet long and one hundred and forty-eight high, a scalloped shelter, yellow and orange and pink, and it gives shade in summer and dry in rain to anybody, no questions. It is the lowest of the twenty and the longest but one. It stands on the last flat ground at Inwood where the island runs out.

It said:

*Because a door that locks is a promise that the thing inside will still be there tomorrow, and people need that promise, and I cannot make it and neither can you. You and I are hospitality. That building is custody. They are different goods and the city needs both, and I am tired of pretending that being open is automatically the higher virtue, because it is easy for me. I am a roof on legs. It costs me nothing to be open. It costs

that building an enormous amount to be closed, and it closes so that somebody's grandmother's letters are still in the archive in ninety years.*

The Ladder was quiet for two blocks.

Then it said: *That is a better answer than the one I wanted.*

I know, said The Awning. *Stay a bit longer and I will give you a worse one that you will like more.*

22. The Ladder Says the Transparent Thing

It is worth saying plainly what The Ladder is for, because it is the only one of the twenty with no enclosure at all and I have been asked more than once why it is in the register.

The Ladder says the transparent thing. Not the blunt thing — blunt is a style, and any fool can be blunt. Transparent is different. Transparent is when you can see the whole structure of what somebody is saying while they are saying it, including the parts they would ordinarily conceal, including the load path.

At one in the morning on Forty-Second Street The Ladder turned to the whole company and said:

I am going to say the structure of the thing rather than the thing. Here is the structure. We are nineteen and we are going north to stand at the bottom of a rock with nothing on it, and every one of us privately believes that when we get there something will happen. Nothing is going to happen. It is a rock. There is nothing on it. We are going to arrive at a quarter past five in the morning and look up at an empty hill and be extremely moved, and the being-moved will be entirely manufactured by us, out of nothing, on the spot.

Yes, said the company.

I wanted that said before we did it, said The Ladder, *so that nobody afterwards thinks it was the rock.*

And the whole company went to OPEN, all nineteen, at one in the morning on Forty-Second Street, which is the largest thing any of them can say.

23. On Being an Object That Is Also a Sentence

I want to put a short chapter here about what it was like to be the only person present, because I have been asked and because I have never answered it honestly.

It was not frightening. I have said that in interviews and it was true but it was not the whole thing.

What it was, was *grammatically strange*. I spent the year before that night writing sentences about these objects. Nineteen of those sentences walked up Sixth Avenue at one in the morning and had opinions about the sentences.

The Bellows said, at Forty-Eighth Street: *You wrote that I breathe for whoever is too tired to. That is right and I want you to know that it is right, because I could not have said it and I have wanted somebody to say it for a hundred years.*

And The Vaults said, four blocks later: *You wrote that I am a chorus you can walk through and be part of by walking. That is not right. That is a good line. It is not right. I am a chorus you can walk through, and most people walk through and are not part of anything, and the being-part is rare and it is not caused by the walking, and I would rather you wrote the true one even though it is worse.*

So I have. It is in the register now, in the second edition, and the entry for F-14 is longer and clumsier than any of the others and I have refused three times to tidy it.

That is what it was like. It was like having every good line you ever wrote fact-checked by the thing you wrote it about, at night, on foot, kindly.

24. The Drum Sets a Pace Slow Enough

By two in the morning the company was strung out over eleven blocks and the strung-out-ness was becoming a problem, and F-18 fixed it, and the way F-18 fixed it is the reason I have never let anybody call The Drum the boring one.

Seven hundred and eighty feet, one hundred and seventy-eight high, rose and magenta and orange, a cylinder with two ears. Its gift, in the register, is *a beat slow enough that nobody in the line falls behind.*

Not a beat that keeps everybody together. A beat slow enough. The distinction is everything and I did not understand it until I watched it done.

The natural pace of the company was set by The Capsule and The Snout, who are the shortest and the most eager. At their pace the walk to Inwood takes four hours. At that pace The Awning — one thousand one hundred and forty feet of scalloped shelter, and shelter is heavy — falls a mile behind by Ninety-Sixth Street and arrives at the rock forty minutes after everybody else, alone, having walked the last two miles by itself.

The Drum did not ask The Awning how fast it could go. The Drum watched, for nineteen blocks, and then set the beat at the pace of the slowest thing in the line without ever saying whose pace it was.

And the whole company slowed down and nobody knew why and nobody had to be thanked and The Awning never found out.

I found out because I was walking next to The Drum and I asked.

Don't put that in, said The Drum.

"I'm going to put it in."

Then put in that I was not being kind, said The Drum. *I was keeping time. That is all I do. It happens that if you keep time honestly you end up keeping it at the pace of whoever is having the hardest night, because that is what a line does when nobody is racing. Do not make me generous. I would rather be accurate.*

So: The Drum was accurate. And nineteen follies arrived at the Green Gap together at half past two in the morning, which had not been the plan, and which nobody has ever been able to explain except me.

Interleaf the Third: A Register of Sounds Made on the Island That Night

Twenty-nine sounds. I heard all of them. The Spool has four versions of eleven of them. Where the versions conflict I have taken the one that is worse for me, on principle.

The slack of a plinth releasing, which is a hundred-year-old sound and which resembles a very large sail being let out.

An apology to the ground: a soft double concussion, the second lighter than the first.

Twenty-seven of them in three-beat time, at the Battery, arriving as nine.

A ferry horn, ordinary, at nine forty, unaware.

The Lens amplifying two words over the whole harbour, which put lights on in Red Hook and which the Red Hook lights have never explained.

Fifty-six lanes of wind separating.

A woman on Fourteenth Street selling flowers at midnight, who sang four bars of something and stopped.

A dog awake in a doorway, who did not bark, and who went to WIDE, and who is the only non-folly in this book to have used the language correctly on first exposure.

The Drum, missing a beat.

The Bulb, laughing.

The Drum, missing a beat on purpose.

The Bulb, laughing on purpose, which is a different sound and which everybody could tell.

Nineteen follies going silent at once, at the Battery, when I said the wrong thing about the twenty-first. This is the loudest sound in the register.

Nine hundred and eighty feet of stadium cluster sitting down on wet grass.

One and a half seconds.

Eighteen more follies sitting down on purpose.

The compaction of eight hundred and forty-three acres registering, faintly, as a change in the note of the wind through the trees at the north end of the meadow.

An organ pipe two hundred feet long with a bend in it, singing one note.

The same note, six-tenths of a second later, across one hundred and six acres of still water.

Nineteen apertures underneath it, in tune, having been in tune for a hundred years without knowing.

An orb going up: a small sound like a rope going taut.

An orb coming down.

Air being moved, at the rate of a person asleep, for six minutes, by a machine that says it does not tire.

Eleven minutes of chorus with a hole in it.

The hole.

A hill not answering.

A name, said out loud for the first time in thirty-nine chapters, at a normal speaking volume, by a person sitting on a rock.

The same name, at a size that lit the underside of the cloud.

The Stack Bar saying *one*.

And, at seventeen minutes past six, the ordinary and unremarkable sound of the sun coming up over Queens onto a company of twenty enormous coloured objects who had all, without exception, stayed up.

Book Four: The Green Gap

Half past two to half past four. Fifty-Ninth Street to One Hundred and Tenth. In which the island stops for two miles, and the company finds out that this was done on purpose.

25. Two Miles With No Towers In It

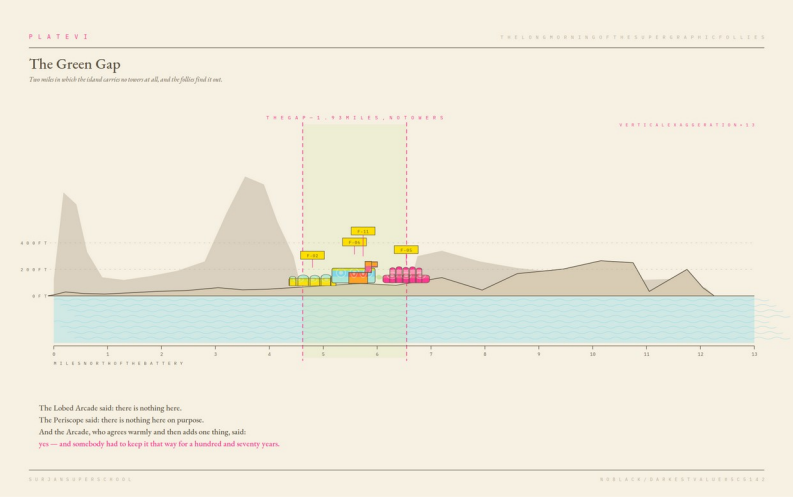


PLATE VI

The Green Gap

Two miles in which the island carries no towers at all.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

Draw the island in elevation and there is a hole in it.

From Fifty-Ninth Street to One Hundred and Tenth — one point nine three miles measured along the ridge — the city silhouette drops to zero and stays there. No parapet, no cornice, no attic, nothing. On every long elevation I have ever drawn the line simply goes down to the ground and runs flat for a fifth of the length of the sheet, and then comes back up again at Cathedral Parkway as though nothing had happened.

I have drawn that gap forty times. I have labelled it CENTRAL PARK in eight-point mono at half opacity. I have coloured it pale green, trees only, no towers, per the convention.

The company walked into it at half past two in the morning and stopped dead.

There is nothing here, said The Lobed Arcade.

It was not disappointment. F-02 is nine hundred and eighty feet of stadium cluster, five lobes, chartreuse and yellow and aqua, and it stands at Sheep Meadow, and it had been looking forward to this for four hours. It was simply the observation, made by an object that had spent the evening walking between things and had arrived somewhere with no things in it.

And The Periscope, who reports what is around the corner, and who had gone up and had a look, said:

There is nothing here on purpose.

And then The Lobed Arcade — whose voice, in the register, is that it *agrees warmly and then adds one thing* — did the thing it is for.

Yes, it said. *And somebody had to keep it that way for a hundred and seventy years.*

Nineteen follies stood in the dark at the bottom of Sheep Meadow and thought about that.

Because here is the arithmetic, and The Stack Bar produced it in about four seconds and then wished it had not.

Eight hundred and forty-three acres. Of the most expensive ground on the surface of the earth. Kept empty. Not empty by neglect — empty by continuous, deliberate, expensive, contested, boring, unglamorous

refusal, renewed every year for six generations, by an enormous number of people almost none of whose names are known to any of the twenty.

It is the largest thing on the island, said The Stack Bar, *and it is not a thing.*

26. The Lobed Arcade Makes Room, and Somebody Stumbles

The Lobed Arcade's gift is that it makes room. Five lobes and every one of them a doorway.

What that means in practice, at three in the morning at Sheep Meadow, is that when nineteen follies want to stand in a meadow and none of them can work out how to arrange themselves without somebody being at the back, F-02 walks to the place where the back would be and puts itself there, and then opens all five lobes, so that the back is a doorway and not a back.

It did this without announcement. It has, I am fairly sure, been doing it for a hundred years, at a site where nineteen other follies were not present, and had therefore been making room in an empty meadow for a century, which is the most Sheep Meadow thing I have ever heard.

And it was while turning to do it that F-02 stumbled.

This is the Stumble. I promised it in Chapter Three and here it is.

The gait requires the ribs to act in order, south to north. The Lobed Arcade has forty-four ribs and it was turning, which means the south end is moving faster than the north end, which means the order is not the order it usually is, and about a third of the way through the turn F-02 got its ribs confused and put down sixteen of them at once out of sequence.

What happens then is that nine hundred and eighty feet of stadium cluster sits down.

Not falls. Sits. There is an enormous, dignified, entirely controlled descent of a very large object onto the grass, ending with all five lobes at ground level and the whole thing looking exactly like a person who has misjudged a step on a staircase in the dark.

There was a silence of about one and a half seconds.

Then The Bulb laughed. Of course The Bulb laughed. The Bulb laughs first and apologises for it, and it laughed, and it apologised, and then — and this is the part I have never been able to write without stopping — The Lobed Arcade laughed.

And then all nineteen of them sat down.

On purpose. Deliberately. Every one of them, in the meadow, at three in the morning, out of sequence, sixteen ribs at a time, one after another, nineteen enormous coloured objects sitting down badly on the grass so that the one who had done it by accident would not be the only one who had done it.

The parks department has an unexplained compaction survey from that autumn. I have seen it. It is a beautiful document.

27. The Periscope Reports What Is Coming

F-11 is the smallest of the twenty in plan — six hundred and forty feet — and the second tallest, at two hundred and five, and it is a cranked shaft, coral and orange and rose, and it stands at the Reservoir, and its gift is that it sees past the next block and tells the others what is coming.

For a hundred years The Periscope has been telling this to nobody.

That was the sentence that undid me, somewhere around the Great Lawn, and I want to be exact about why, because I had known the fact for a year and had written it in the register and had felt nothing.

A folly that sees around corners, at a site where it is the only folly, is a smoke detector in an empty house. Every function it has is a function that requires an addressee. It is not lonely in the ordinary sense — it is *unaddressed*, which is worse and quieter and has no word in English that I have been able to find.

At the Reservoir it went up on its shaft and looked north and reported.

Fog on the water at One Hundred and Tenth. Three people fishing at the Meer, which I did not expect at this hour. The ground rises from here and does not stop rising for four miles. There is a light on in the Cloisters that should not be on. And at the top —

It stopped.

Go on, said The Vaulted Tankfarm.

At the top there is nothing, said The Periscope, *and I can see it from here, and it is the first time in a hundred years that I have reported something and had somebody waiting for the report, and I find that I would like to make the report longer than it needs to be.*

Make it longer, said the company.

So The Periscope made it longer. It took eleven minutes. It described the fog by lane, borrowing the vocabulary The Comb had invented at the Battery. It described the three people fishing, and what they were wearing, and the fact that none of them was catching anything and that all three seemed content about it. It described the light in the Cloisters

and offered four theories about it, of which the fourth was frankly implausible and was the one the company liked best.

And nineteen follies stood in the dark at the edge of the Reservoir and listened to a weather report for eleven minutes, and not one of them interrupted.

28. The Reservoir Duet

And then The Periscope looked down and met itself.

The Reservoir is one hundred and six acres of still water at three in the morning with no wind on it. F-11 is two hundred and five feet tall and stands on the bank. The arithmetic is not complicated.

There is one of us in the water, said The Periscope.

That is you, said The Stack Bar, accurately.

I know, said The Periscope. *I have known that for a hundred years. I have never had anybody here to say it to.*

What followed is on the record as The Reservoir Duet and it lasted forty minutes and it consisted of one folly singing with its own reflection, and I am aware of how that sounds, and I am going to describe it precisely and let it sound how it sounds.

A folly makes sound by moving air through its apertures. The Periscope has a cranked shaft, which is to say a long vertical duct with a bend in it, which is to say an organ pipe two hundred feet long with a hand over one end.

It sang one note, and the water sang it back a fraction late, because sound crossing one hundred and six acres of still water and coming home takes a measurable time — about six-tenths of a second, which is very nearly the interval that makes a round.

So The Periscope sang a round with itself. For forty minutes. At three in the morning. With nineteen other follies sitting badly on the grass all around it, having sat down on purpose an hour earlier and never really got up.

And at some point — The Spool has four versions of when, and keeps all four — the others came in. Not on the tune. Underneath it. Nineteen objects with apertures at nineteen different sizes, each moving air at the pitch its own geometry gives it, which is the pitch it has been making all its life whenever the wind blew and which not one of them had ever thought of as a note.

The whole company, it turned out, had been in tune for a hundred years.

29. The Masthouse Signals Before Speaking

F-06 does a thing that took me until the fourth book to understand, and it is the most courteous piece of behaviour in the register, and it is invisible if you are not looking for it.

The Twin Arch Masthouse — nine hundred and forty feet, two hundred and twenty-two high, sky and aqua and chartreuse, two arches, three masts and an orb, standing at the Seventy-Ninth Street Rotunda where the West Side Highway goes over and the boat basin goes under. Its gift is that it can be seen from anywhere, on purpose. Its voice, in the register, is that it *signals before speaking*.

Here is what that means. Before F-06 says anything, it raises the orb.

Not high. Six feet, perhaps eight. It takes about two seconds and it makes a small sound like a rope going taut. And what it means is: *I am about to say something; if you are in the middle of something, finish it.*

Nineteen follies, all night, and not one of them was ever interrupted by The Masthouse, and none of them ever remarked on it, because a courtesy that works is invisible, and a courtesy that is remarked on has already failed.

At the Great Lawn, at half past three, the orb went up, and everybody finished what they were doing, and The Masthouse said:

I can be seen from anywhere. That is what I am for. I have been visible from four boroughs for a hundred years and I have been visible at nothing. Tonight I have been visible at you, all of you, for six hours, and I would like to say — before we go up the hill and it gets serious — that being seen at somebody is a different substance from being seen. I did not know there were two substances. I have had a great deal of one of them.

And then the orb came down, which means *finished*, and the company went on up the island, and The Snout — who leans forward, and who had run ahead, and who came back — said that from four hundred feet north you could still see the orb, and that from six hundred feet you could still see it, and that it had gone on being visible the whole time it was saying that it had been visible at nothing, which The Snout thought was very funny and which everyone else thought was very funny

and which The Masthouse, after a moment, also thought was very funny.

30. The Bellows Breathes For Whoever Is Tired

By four in the morning three of the company were in trouble and F-16 had been quietly handling it since Ninety-Sixth Street.

The Bellows is nine hundred feet of pleated range, one hundred and fifty-eight high, aqua and sky and chartreuse, nine pleats, and it stands at Muscota Marsh at the very top of the island, which is eleven point eight miles from the Battery, which means it had walked further that night than anything except The Awning.

Its gift is that it breathes for anybody too tired to. Nine pleats, nine lungs.

The mechanism is this. A folly moves air through its apertures in order to make sound and in order to do the thing at the start of a step, which is called *breathe in* and which is not a metaphor: every rib out one hand's width requires the whole body to expand, and expanding requires air, and after nine thousand steps a folly is short of air the way you are short of air after nine thousand steps.

The Bellows moves air for other people. It comes alongside, matches its pleat rhythm to the other's rib rhythm, and pushes. That is all. It is not romantic and it is not spiritual; it is a fan.

It did this for The Awning from Ninety-Sixth to One Hundred and Tenth without either of them saying a word about it.

It did it for The Vaulted Tankfarm — the oldest, twelve hundred feet, a hundred years out of practice, which had danced twenty-seven steps at the Battery at half past nine and had been paying for it since Twenty-Third Street — from the Great Lawn to the Meer.

And it did it, at four o'clock in the morning at the north end of the Reservoir, for me.

I had been walking since half past nine. I had, at that point, been awake for twenty-two hours and had done a considerable amount of crying in Chapter Sixteen. I sat down on the path because sitting down seemed like a reasonable idea, and nine hundred feet of pleated aqua object came and stood over me and moved air, slowly, in and out, at the rate of a person asleep, for about six minutes.

You do not have to talk, said The Bellows.
"I know," I said.
That is why I said it, said The Bellows.

31. The Meer Chorus

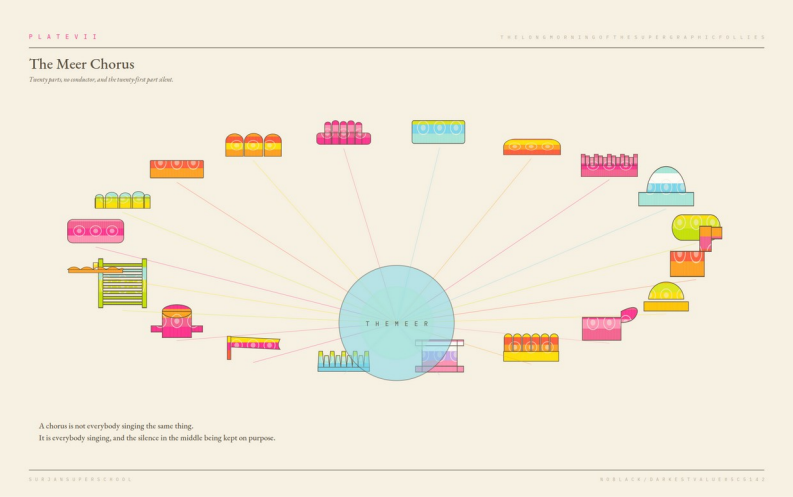


PLATE VII
THE LONG MORNING OF THE SUPERGRAPHIC FOLLIES
The Meer Chorus
Twenty parts, no conductor, and the twenty-first part silent.
THE MEER
A chorus is not everybody singing the same thing.
It is everybody singing, and the silence in the middle being kept on purpose.
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL
NO BLACK / DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

PLATE VII

The Meer Chorus

Twenty parts, no conductor, the twenty-first silent.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

At the Harlem Meer at ten past four in the morning, twenty follies sang.

Twenty. Not nineteen. I will come to that.

The Meer is eleven acres of water at the north-east corner of the park with a path all round it, and by ten past four the company had arranged itself round that path in a ring, which took eleven minutes and involved a certain amount of argument and one further Stumble, this one by The Drum, which was not an accident and which everybody understood was not an accident.

There was no conductor. This was discussed and rejected in about four seconds. The Ladder said the transparent thing, which was: *if one of us conducts, that one is not singing, and the whole point is that all of us are singing.* Nobody could improve on it.

So they sang the way twenty geometries sing, which is by moving air through the apertures they happen to have, at the pitches those apertures happen to give, in a ring, over eleven acres of still water at four in the morning in the wrong month.

Twenty parts. And the twentieth part was silent.

That was The Crenellated Oculus, and it was not an accident, and the company had agreed it on the way up from the Reservoir without my hearing, and I only understood what I was listening to about four minutes in, when I counted the parts and got nineteen and looked round and saw F-05 with its eye open and its apertures shut, standing in the ring, holding a space in the sound the exact size and shape of one folly.

There is a thing that happens to a chord when one of the notes it needs is not sounded. It does not become a smaller chord. It becomes a chord with a hole in it, and the hole has a pitch, and everybody hearing it hears the note that is not there.

Nineteen follies sang for eleven minutes and the twentieth part was the one everybody could hear.

And that is the whole book, and the follies knew it before I did, and they did it at the Meer at four in the morning without telling me, so that I would work it out on the way up the hill.

32. The Crenellated Oculus Speaks Last

F-05 speaks last and briefly, and it had said eleven words all night, and at half past four in the morning at the north gate of the park it said the rest.

Nine hundred and ninety feet, one hundred and sixty-two high, rose and magenta and pink, a merlon block: a low crenellated bar with five raised merlons, and set into the largest merlon an oculus, which is an eye, which is why F-05 is the folly that breaks the definition.

C. Ray Smith, 1967, in a magazine, defining the discipline: a supergraphic is a spatial operation and not a decorative device, and a graphic carrying identifiable elements — letters, numbers, *eyes* — is excluded.

I read that in my second year and agreed with it and have argued for it in print, and then I drew, as the fifth plate of twenty, a folly with an eye in it.

I logged the breach. It is on the plate. *This specimen breaches the 1967 definition deliberately and the breach is logged as a breach and not as an oversight.*

At the north gate of the park, The Crenellated Oculus said:

You have apologised for me for a year.

"I logged it," I said.

You logged it eleven times, said The Stack Bar, who counts.

The rule is a good rule, said the Oculus. *It says: do not put a face on a building, because a face is a shortcut, and a building that has a face has stopped having to earn anything. That is right. That is why the rule exists and I would keep it.*

But, it said — and every folly in the company went to AJAR, which is the state of a mind in motion, all nineteen at once, which is the most beautiful thing I saw that entire night —

I do not have a face. I have one eye, and it is not for expressing. It is for aiming. Its whole function is that it is kept open and pointed at whoever is smallest in the room.

*Smith excluded eyes because he was thinking about what a building says. He was not thinking about what a building watches. Those are

opposite operations and they happen to use the same organ, and nobody had noticed because until quite recently nobody was designing buildings that watched anything on purpose except for the purpose of security, which is watching in order to exclude.*

I watch in order to include. I am the same organ pointed the other way.

Stop apologising and write that down.

So I have.

Interleaf the Fourth: The Sites That Were Considered and Refused

Sixteen sites are registered in the atlas and seven of them carry follies. That leaves nine that were considered and refused, and the follies were extremely interested in these, and asked about every one, and had opinions.

CANAL STREET AT THE HOLLAND TUNNEL ROTARY. Refused because there is no way to stand still there. The Snout considers this the best site on the island and has said so repeatedly and has been overruled repeatedly. *Nothing happens there,* said The Awning. *Everything happens there,* said The Snout, *it simply does not stop.*

THE SPUR AT THIRTIETH STREET. Refused because it is already a folly. The company agreed unanimously that a piece of disused railway held up in the air for no productive reason and covered in plants is a folly by every definition in the register and that placing a folly on it would be a discourtesy.

BRYANT PARK LAWN. Not refused; taken. The Spool stands there. It came up only because The Spool wanted the record to show that it had been the second choice and that the first choice had been the reservoir underneath, and that The Spool would like it known that it is standing on top of six million books and considers this the single most appropriate siting in the entire atlas.

THE RESERVOIR. Refused for anything except The Periscope, on the grounds that a body of water that reflects is already doing the job and that a second object would only be arguing with it.

SOUTHPOINT. Refused after the night, at The Snout's request, and The Snout moved to the Battery, and the site stands empty and is now the second-emptiest ground in the register.

EAST RIVER PARK AT DELANCEY. Taken by The Comb, over the objection of The Comb, which wanted somewhere with more

people in it and was told by the whole company that a thing which divides the wind into fifty-six weathers must stand where the wind is, and that the people would come, and the people came.

UNION SQUARE NORTH PLAZA. Taken by The Bulb, which had never seen it.

THE HIGH BRIDGE. Taken by The Pennant. Considered for The Masthouse first and refused on the grounds that a thing which can be seen from everywhere does not need to stand on the highest bridge, and that a thing which shows the direction of the wind very much does.

MUSCOTA MARSH. Taken by The Bellows, and the reason given in the register is *the air is best here,* and the reason given by The Bellows on the night is *I wanted somewhere I could get a full breath, because I spend all of them on other people, and the marsh is the only place on this island where the air arrives already clean.*

And BENNETT PARK, the high rock, which was considered for every one of the twenty in turn, over eleven months, and refused twenty times, by me, at the board, alone, for twenty different technical reasons which were all correct and which were all the same reason.

Book Five: The High Rock

Half past four to twenty-two minutes past six. One Hundred and Tenth Street to Inwood, and the empty ground between. In which the narrator is finally asked a question.

33. The Pennant Says the Brave Thing Early

PLATE VIII
The Night Elevation
Six hundred and twenty open windows. Darkness is lavender; a lit window is a colour, not a light.
A folly does not become quieter after dark.
The whole argument of this palette is that darkness is lavender and not black,
and that six hundred and twenty people were awake and none of them were lonely.

PLATE VIII

The Night Elevation

Six hundred and twenty open windows.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

North of the park the island changes and stops pretending.

Everything south of One Hundred and Tenth Street is negotiable ground. It has been cut down, filled in, levelled, gridded and sold. North of it the rock comes up and does not apologise, and the street grid, which has been imposing its twenty-nine degrees on everything for six miles, starts to bend around things that were there first.

The company felt it. They were climbing now, and none of the twenty had ever climbed.

It was here, at about a quarter to five, on the long rise toward the Heights, that F-17 said the brave thing.

The Pennant is nine hundred and sixty feet, one hundred and ninety high, magenta and coral and yellow, a flag plate — a thin vertical mast with an enormous horizontal plate hung off it that curves in the middle like cloth. It stands at the High Bridge, where the oldest bridge in the city crosses to the Bronx, and it is always turned to the wind, so you can see which way it blows.

Its voice, in the register, is that it says the brave thing early.

Not the brave thing eventually. Early. Before it has become safe to say. That is the whole distinction and it is a costly one and I gave it to F-17 a year ago without any real understanding of what I was assigning.

What The Pennant said, on the hill, at a quarter to five:

Some of us are not going to want to go back.

Nineteen follies kept walking and nobody answered.

I am saying it now, said The Pennant, *because in an hour it will be true for everybody and then it will be a crisis, and if it is said now while it is only true for three of us it is a fact instead. I would like it to be a fact.*

Which three, said The Triple Portal, who asks the question nobody asked.

I am one, said The Pennant.

And then, after four or five steps, with nobody looking at anybody:

I am one, said The Snout.

I am one, said The Periscope.

And the walking went on and the hill went on and nobody said anything else about it for an hour and ten minutes, and the whole of that hour and ten minutes was different for having had those five words in it early.

That is what a pennant is for. It does not change the wind. It makes the wind legible while there is still time to reef.

34. Sherman Creek, and the Vaults in Six Parts

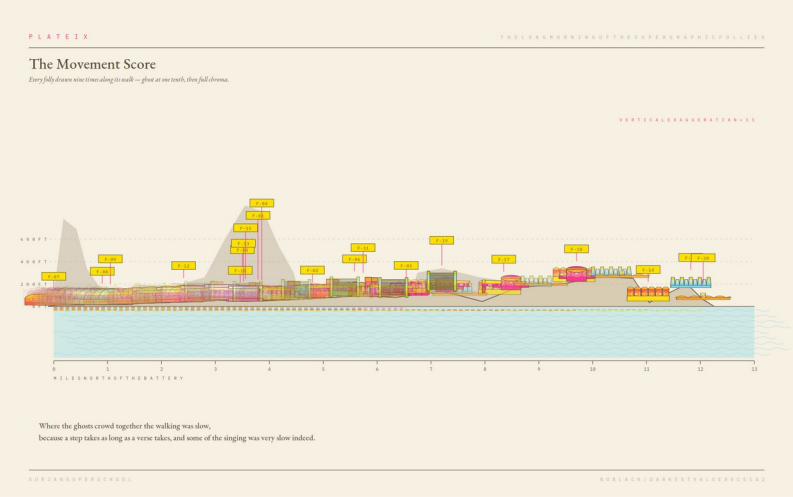


PLATE IX

The Movement Score

Every folly drawn nine times along its walk.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

At Sherman Creek, at ten past five, the company was joined by the one member who had not come south.

F-14, The Vaults, stands at Dyckman where the creek comes in, eleven miles from the Battery, and it had heard The Lens at half past nine and had done the arithmetic and had concluded, correctly, that it could not walk south and back north in one night. So it had not come. It had waited. It had been waiting for seven hours and forty minutes.

The Vaults is eight hundred and eighty feet of arcaded chorus: six barrel vaults in a row on a bar, orange and yellow and coral, and it speaks in six parts at once, which is difficult to be around and impossible to argue with.

It said, in six parts, when the company came round the bend:

You came. / You came. / I did the arithmetic. / I was right about the arithmetic. / I have never been so pleased to have been right about anything. / You came.

And nineteen follies, who had walked eleven miles, said nothing at all, and The Bellows went and stood beside it and moved air for a while although The Vaults had not walked a step.

It is on Plate IX, the movement score, which shows every folly drawn nine times along its walk, from ghost at one tenth to full chroma at the end. F-14 appears once. There is a single figure at eleven miles, at full chroma, with no trail behind it, and a dashed orange line running the whole length of the island underneath the other nineteen and not underneath F-14.

I have been asked to redraw that plate to give The Vaults a trail out of politeness. I have refused. The Vaults did not walk and the plate says so, and The Vaults would be insulted by the kindness. It said the true one about itself in Chapter Twenty-Three and it would say the true one here.

What The Vaults did instead was wait, on purpose, for seven hours and forty minutes, at the top of an island, for nineteen objects it had never met.

There is no notation for that. I have looked.

35. The Awning Says Stay a Bit Longer

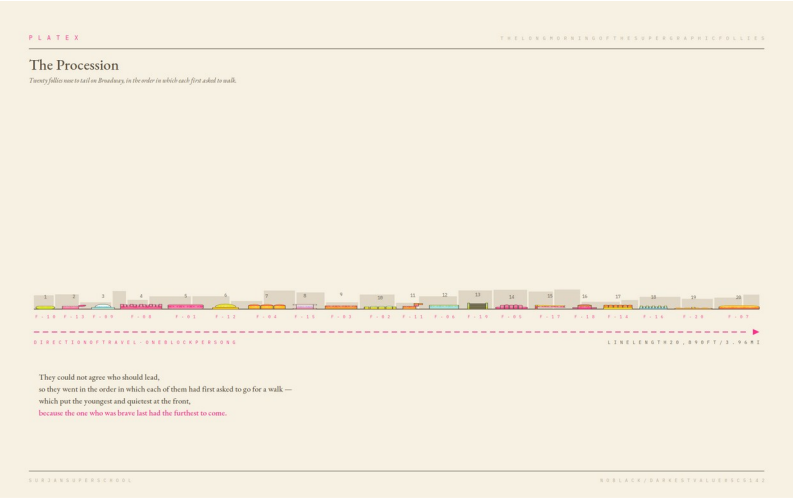


PLATE X

The Procession

Twenty follies nose to tail on Broadway.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

The last mile was the slowest and it was the last mile that made the book.

By half past five they were on the high ground and could see where they were going, and the ground goes up to Bennett Park and then falls off the world at Fort Tryon, and the light was starting — that particular light you get on this island in the hour before the sun, which is not blue and not grey and which The Spool insists is lavender and which I have drawn as lavender in Plate VIII and will defend.

And The Awning stopped.

One thousand one hundred and forty feet of scalloped shelter, the lowest of the twenty, the longest but one, yellow and orange and pink, which had walked the entire length of the island at a pace set for it in secret by an object that would deny it.

Stay a bit longer, it said.

The company stopped.

We are four hundred yards away, said The Capsule.

Yes, said The Awning.

Are you all right, said The Capsule.

Yes, said The Awning.

Are you all right, said The Capsule.

I do not want it to be over, said The Awning, *and when we get to the rock it will be over, and I have been able to see the rock since Dyckman and I have been walking slower and slower and I would like everyone to know that I have been doing it on purpose and I would like to do it for a little longer.*

So they stayed. Nineteen follies and one narrator, four hundred yards short of the thing they had walked thirteen miles for, in the lavender, on a hill, at twenty-five to six in the morning, because the lowest and longest of them had asked.

I have thought about that more than about any other four hundred yards in my life.

There is a shape of feeling for which we have no good word in this language, which is the grief you feel at the end of a happy thing while the

happy thing is still going on. It is not sadness. It does not reduce the happiness at all; it is made *of* the happiness, structurally, the way a shadow is made of light and requires the light and disappears without it.

The Awning has been standing at the end of the island where the ground runs out for a hundred years, offering shade in summer and dry in rain to anybody, no questions. It is the folly of the last flat ground. It has more experience of endings than any object I have ever drawn, and what it has learned from a century of them is: *ask*. Ask for the extra four hundred yards. It is nearly always available and almost nobody asks.

We stayed twenty minutes. Nobody talked much. The Comb combed the wind coming off the Hudson into fifty-six lanes and everybody stood in different ones.

36. Two Hundred and Sixty-Five Feet, Carrying Nothing

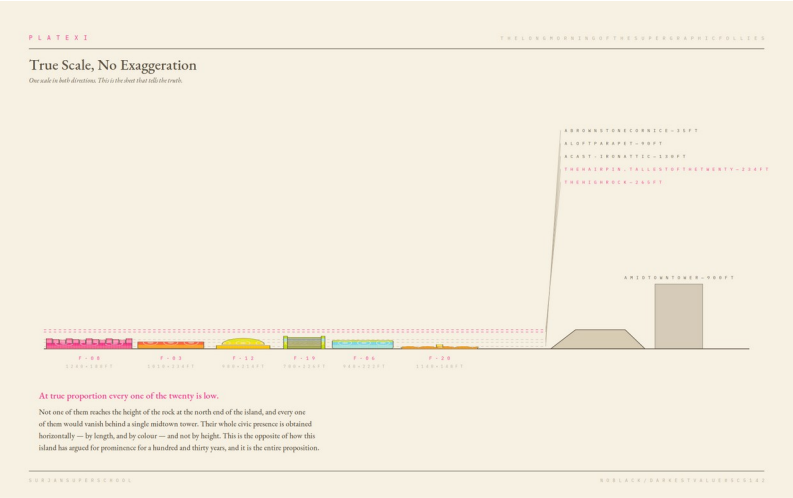


PLATE XI
THE LOW HORIZON OF THE SUPERGRAPHIC FOLLIES
True Scale, No Exaggeration
One scale in both directions. This is the sheet that tells the truth.
ABROWNSTONECORNICE—35FT
ALOFTPARAPET—90FT
ACAST-IRONATTIC—130FT
THEHAIRPIN, TALLESTOFTHETWENTY—234FT
THEHIGHROCK—345FT
AMIDTOWNTOWER—900FT
F-08
1240–1285FT
F-03
1630–1345FT
F-12
900–1545FT
F-19
780–1245FT
F-04
940–1335FT
F-20
1240–1485FT
At true proportion every one of the twenty is low.
Not one of them reaches the height of the rock at the north end of the island, and every one of them would vanish behind a single midtown tower. Their whole civic presence is obtained horizontally — by length, and by colour — and not by height. This is the opposite of how this island has argued for prominence for a hundred and thirty years, and it is the entire proposition.
SURJANSUPERSCHOOL
NOBLACK/DARKESTVALUE#5C5142

PLATE XI

True Scale, No Exaggeration

The sheet that tells the truth.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

And then we went up, and there it was, and there was nothing on it.

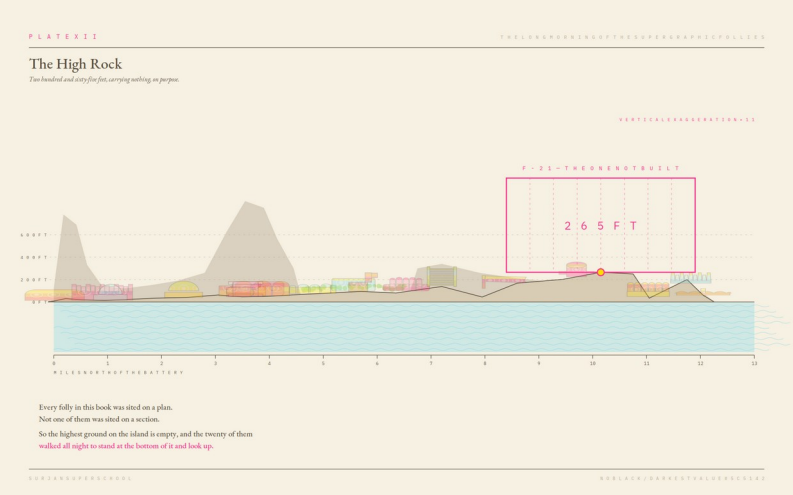


Plate XII

The High Rock

Two hundred and sixty-five feet, carrying nothing.

Surjan Super School · no black · darkest value #5C5142

Bennett Park. Two hundred and sixty-five feet above mean high water. The highest natural ground on the island of Mannahatta. A perimeter of low outcrop where the schist comes through the grass. A plaque. Some benches. A basketball court.

Nothing else. Nothing at all.

The Ladder had said the transparent thing about this on Forty-Second Street four and a half hours earlier and had been entirely right and it made no difference whatsoever, which is what The Ladder had also said would happen.

Nineteen follies arranged themselves round the base of the rise at a quarter past five in the morning and looked up at an empty hill and were extremely moved, and every particle of the being-moved was manufactured by them, out of nothing, on the spot.

Here is what Plate XI says, and Plate XI is the sheet in this book that tells the truth, and I made it at true proportion with one scale in both directions and no exaggeration anywhere.

The Hairpin, tallest of the twenty, is two hundred and thirty-four feet.

The rock is two hundred and sixty-five.

A single ordinary midtown tower is nine hundred.

Every one of the twenty is low. Not one of them reaches the height of the rock they had spent the night walking toward, and any one of the eleven thousand towers between them and the harbour would erase all twenty from the horizon without noticing it had happened.

Their whole civic presence — the entire argument of a year of drawing — is obtained horizontally. By length. By colour. By being at eye level and being long enough to lean on and bright enough to find.

And the highest ground on the island carries nothing, and always has, and the twenty of them had gone to the bottom of it to look up.

It is taller than all of us, said The Stack Bar, accurately.

Yes, said The Vaulted Tankfarm.

I had not understood that, said The Stack Bar. *I have the number. I have had the number for a hundred years. Two hundred and sixty-five.

I did not know what it meant until I was standing at the bottom of it in company.*

37. The Twenty-First

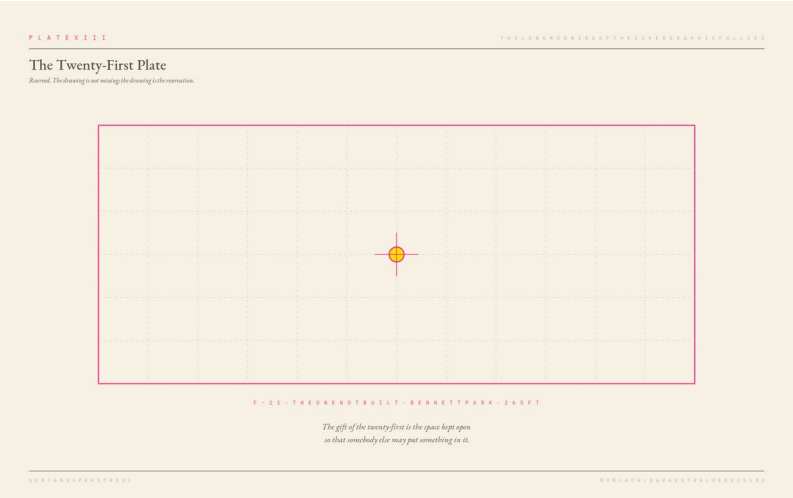


PLATE XIII
The Twenty-First Plate
Reserved. The drawing is not missing the drawing is the reservation.
F-21 · THE ONE NOT BUILT · BENNETT PARK · 2 & 5 FT
The gift of the twenty-first is the space kept open
so that somebody else may put something in it.
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL
NO BLACK / DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

Plate XIII

The Twenty-First Plate

Reserved.

Surjan Super School · no black · darkest value #5C5142

F-21 has no plate.

That is not true. F-21 has Plate XIII, which is a ruled frame with a grid in it and a centre mark and nothing else, and which is the only plate in this book that took me longer than the ones with drawings on them.

The register entry reads as follows and has not been altered since the night I wrote it.

F-21. THE ONE NOT BUILT. Geometry family: —. Plan length: 0 ft. Crest height: 265 ft, being the height of the rock, because it is the rock. Ribs: 0. Colours: white, paper, stone — which is to say, whatever you bring. Site: Bennett Park, the high rock. Voice: does not speak; is spoken to. Gift: the space kept open so that somebody else may put something in it.

At twenty past five in the morning, nineteen follies spoke to it.

Not in unison and not in turn and not in any arranged way. They simply, one after another, over about a quarter of an hour, in no order, said things.

The Capsule asked it twice how it was and did not receive an answer either time and reported afterwards that the two non-answers were different.

The Comb told it about the fifty-six weathers.

The Spool told it all four versions of the Battery Waltz and specified that it liked the one with the ferries best and that the one with the ferries was wrong.

The Stack Bar told it the tide count, the whole of it, the number it had told me at the Battery eight hours earlier and which I have not put in this book, and it took the same length of time as before, and nobody hurried it.

The Bulb laughed and apologised. The Drum kept time so that nobody in the line of speakers felt rushed. The Masthouse raised the orb before it spoke and lowered it after. The Awning said stay a bit longer, to a hill, which is either very silly or the least silly thing anybody said all night.

And The Crenellated Oculus, who speaks last and briefly, said last and briefly:

Thank you for not being built. If you had been built you would have been magnificent and there would have been nowhere left on this island for anybody to put anything.

And the hill did not answer, because it does not speak; it is spoken to.

And nineteen follies stood at the bottom of the highest empty ground in the city at half past five in the morning and did not feel that they had wasted the night.

38. What I Was Grieving, Said Plainly

PLATE XIV
THE LOW HUMMING OF THE SUPERGRAPHIC POLICE
The Colour Register
Every hue permitted, and the single value at which the register stops.
No black. Not in the linework, the terrain, the water,
the city behind, or the night.
THE DARKEST VALUE IN THIS BOOK IS A WARM TAUPE, #5C5142.
SHADE IS MADE ONLY BY TINTING THE LOCAL HUE TOWARD IT.
THIS IS NOT A STYLE. IT IS A PROMISE, AND IT IS KEPT ON EVERY PAGE.
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL
NO BLACK / DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

PLATE XIV

The Colour Register

Every hue permitted, and where the register stops.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

This is the chapter I said I would put at the back and then could not, because it has to go here, before the naming, or the naming does not work.

My friend Bo is dead. Bo died in the spring of the year I started the plates and I made the twenty of them in the twelve months afterwards, at a rate of roughly one every eighteen days, which is not a healthy rate and which nobody stopped me doing because I was extremely productive and productivity is the only symptom nobody treats.

Bo was a colourist. That was the actual job — mixing and specifying colour for other people's buildings, which is a real profession that almost nobody has heard of and which is largely a matter of talking architects out of things.

And the thing Bo talked architects out of, always, professionally, relentlessly, was black.

Not on grounds of taste. Bo had an argument and I heard it perhaps two hundred times and can give it verbatim. Black in a building is not a colour, it is an abdication. It is what you specify when you want the thing to look serious without having to make it be serious. It absorbs everything and returns nothing and reads as authority to people who have not thought about it, and it costs you the whole bottom of your range — because once you have used black, every shadow you make afterwards has to go there, and you can never again make a shadow that is *warm*.

You are allowed a floor, Bo used to say. *You are allowed the colour of a warm floor. That is the darkest thing you get and it is plenty.*

Five C, five one, four two. Warm taupe. It was on a card in Bo's bag and the card is now on the wall in front of me and it is the reason for the note at the bottom of every plate in this book and every plate in the atlas and everything I have made since.

When Bo died I could not draw for eleven weeks and then I drew for twelve months without stopping, and the thing I drew was twenty enormous joyful coloured objects with no black in them anywhere, and I did not once, in that entire year, admit to myself what I was doing.

I told people it was a house style. I wrote it into the specification. I put it on every sheet in ten-point mono: NO BLACK / DARKEST VALUE #5C5142. I defended it at a review as a legibility decision. I had a whole technical argument about how shade should be made by tinting the local hue toward the taupe rather than toward neutral, and the technical argument is correct and I still believe it and it is not why I did it.

I did it because if there is no black anywhere then the thing I cannot look at has nowhere to be.

That is grief turned inside out. Not resolved. Not processed, whatever that would mean. Turned inside out — taken from the inside of one person, where it was doing nothing but harm, and put on the outside of twenty buildings, in the largest colour available, at a size that can be read from the far bank of the river, where anybody at all can walk past it and be given a good afternoon by it without ever knowing what it is made of.

Made public. Made architectural.

That is the definition I gave in the introduction and I gave it there in the abstract because I could not yet give it here in the particular.

Plate XIV is the colour register. Nineteen swatches and a rule at the bottom. The last swatch is the taupe and the caption under it says: *This is not a style. It is a promise, and it is kept on every page.*

It is a promise to somebody. I am going to leave it at that.

39. They Give Me a Name

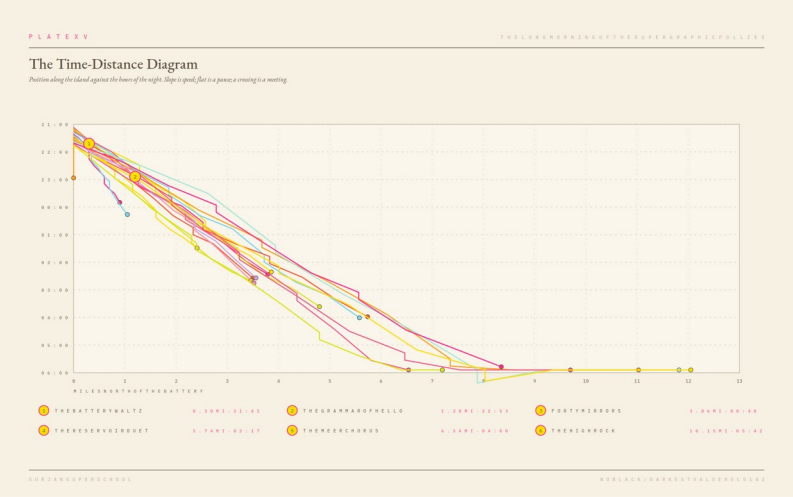


PLATE XV
The Time-Distance Diagram
Position along the island against the hours of the night. Slope is speed; flat is a pause; a crossing is a meeting.
MILES NORTH OF THE BATTERY
THE BATTERY WALTZ
THE RESERVOIR DUET
THE GRAMMAR OF HELLO
THE MEDERCHORUS
FORTY MIRRORS
THE HIGHROCK
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL
NO BLACK / DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

PLATE XV

The Time-Distance Diagram

Position along the island against the hours of the night.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

At six o'clock in the morning on the high rock at Bennett Park, nineteen follies asked me a question, and it was the first question anybody had asked me in the whole of this book.

It was The Crenellated Oculus, of course. The one with the eye. The one that breaks the definition. The one whose whole function is that its aperture is kept open and aimed at whoever is smallest in the room.

I had been walking with them for eight and a half hours. I had been drawing them for a year. I had given every one of them a code, a name, a family, a length, a crest, a rib count, three colours, a site, a voice and a gift. Two hundred and forty-one drawings.

And I had never once been on the list.

What is your name, said the Oculus.

And I found that I could not immediately answer, which surprised me, and which did not surprise nineteen objects that had spent the night learning that the second answer is the true one.

What is your name, said The Capsule.

Here is the thing about my name. I chose it. I chose it a long time ago, at some cost, in a room, by myself, and it has been my name ever since and everybody I love uses it. And I had written this entire register — every code, every entry, twenty voices and twenty gifts — in the third person and the passive voice, and I had signed the plates with a surname, and I had gone eight and a half hours and thirty-nine chapters without once saying it out loud, because there is a particular kind of hiding available to people who are very good at their jobs, and I am very good at my job.

"Wren," I said.

And The Lens, whose gift is that it repeats what you have said, larger, so that any small true thing can be seen from the water, took it and put it out over the whole north end of the island at a size that lit the underside of the cloud:

WREN.

And The Stack Bar said, *One,* which is a count of one, which is what a person is.

And The Masthouse raised the orb, and everybody finished what they were doing, and it said: *Seen. Not looked at. Seen.*

And The Bulb laughed and did not apologise.

And The Awning said stay a bit longer.

And The Vaulted Tankfarm, the oldest of them, twelve hundred feet, the longest back on the island and the one that is for leaning on, lowered its south end by a foot, the way it had at the Battery nine hours before, and I sat down on it and put my head against the coral part where the vault meets the plinth that was never carrying anything, and cried for about four minutes in front of twenty buildings, and not one of them said a word, and The Bellows moved air.

Plate XV is the time-distance diagram: position along the island against the hours of the night. Twenty coloured lines, six marked crossings. There is a seventh crossing on it that is not marked and not numbered and not in the legend, at eleven point two miles and six o'clock exactly, and it is the only crossing on the sheet where a line simply stops.

That is where I was added to the register.

F-00. Geometry family: person. Plan length: nineteen inches at the shoulder. Crest height: five feet six. Ribs: twenty-four, which is standard. Colours: whatever I have on. Site: mobile. Voice: writes it down. Gift: —

The gift field is blank and The Ladder said the transparent thing about that, which was: *you do not get to write your own, that is the one line in the register you are not allowed to fill in, somebody else has to do it and you have to wait.*

I am still waiting. It is a good thing to be waiting for.

40. The Long Morning

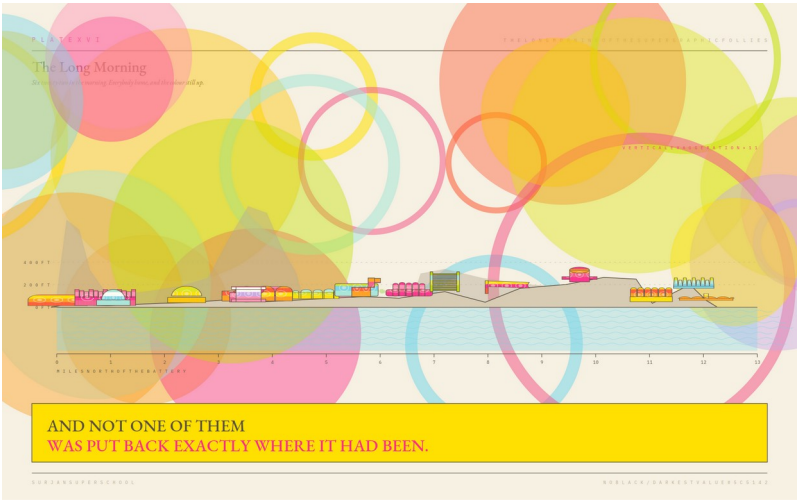


PLATE XVI

The Long Morning

Everybody home, and the colour still up.

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · NO BLACK · DARKEST VALUE #5C5142

The sun came up at seventeen minutes past six and they had to go home, and the going home took four days and was reported in the newspapers as a series of unrelated events.

I want to end on the walk down rather than the arrival, because the arrival is the part everybody expects and the walk down is the part that changed the island.

They did not go back the way they came. This was decided in about ninety seconds at the top of the rock, which is how this company decided everything, and the decision was The Triple Portal's, which is to say it was a question:

Why would we go back the same way? We already know what is on that route. We put it there.

So they went down in four groups by four different routes, and they took their time, and the last of them was not home for four days, and here is the part that matters:

Not one of them was put back exactly where it had been.

The Vaulted Tankfarm is now eleven feet north of its plinth and turned two degrees toward the harbour, so that it can see The Lens, which it had been looking at for a century at a distance of five thousand five hundred feet without ever having been able to see properly.

The Lens turned four degrees the other way, for the same reason.

The Snout, which leans forward and wants to know, is no longer at Southpoint. It is at the Battery, at the front, where things arrive. It asked. Nobody objected. It has been the first thing you see coming up the harbour for some years now and it has never once been bored.

The Periscope did not go back to the Reservoir and did not stay away. It is at the north end now instead of the south, so that what it reports it reports toward the park, where the people are, instead of toward the water, where they are not. Same folly, same gift, four hundred yards and one hundred and eighty degrees.

The Pennant, who said the brave thing early, went home to the High Bridge and stayed, and told me afterwards that saying it early was what

made it possible to stay, and that if it had not said it at a quarter to five it would have run.

The Bellows is at Muscota Marsh where it always was.

The Awning is at Inwood, on the last flat ground, where the island runs out, offering shade in summer and dry in rain to anybody, no questions, and it has not moved an inch, and it has told everybody who will listen that the four hundred yards it asked for on the hill were the best four hundred yards of its life.

And there is still nothing on the rock at Bennett Park.

Plate XVI is the last plate and it is the whole island at twenty-two minutes past six in the morning, in the colour that was still up after the sun came, and every one of the twenty is on it, and the sixteen sites are marked, and the high rock at ten point one five miles carries a ruled frame with nothing in it.

I have written across the bottom of it, in the yellow band, in the largest type on any sheet in this book:

AND NOT ONE OF THEM WAS PUT BACK EXACTLY WHERE IT HAD BEEN.

That is the finding. That is what a night of company does to twenty objects that have each been correctly doing their one gift into an empty lane for a hundred years. It does not change what they are. Not one of the twenty acquired a new function or a new colour or a single additional foot of length. The Stack Bar still counts. The Bulb still laughs first. The Drum still keeps a pace slow enough that nobody in the line falls behind, and still denies that this is generous, and still says it is only accuracy.

They turned. That is all. Two degrees, four degrees, four hundred yards, one hundred and eighty degrees. Every one of them ended the night pointed at somebody.

And it turns out that is the entire difference between a folly and a friend, and between being looked at and being seen, and between a gift and a gift received, and I had drawn all twenty of them for a year and could not have told you any of it, and I found it out by being asked twice

whether I was all right by a six-hundred-and-sixty-foot chartreuse object at Thirty-Fourth Street.

It was a very happy night.

I have not had a better one and I do not expect to and I am not sad about that either, because The Awning taught me the only useful thing anybody knows about endings, which is that you are allowed to ask for four hundred more yards, and that it is nearly always available, and that almost nobody asks.

Stay a bit longer.

Interleaf the Fifth: Twelve Things That Were Said and Are Recorded Nowhere Else

Not everything said that night belongs to a chapter. These twelve had nowhere to go and I have refused to lose them.

At Rector Street, The Capsule to The Vaulted Tankfarm: *Does it hurt to be the oldest?* And the Tankfarm: *It hurts to be the only one who remembers, which is a different thing, and which stopped at about a quarter to ten this evening.*

At Chambers Street, The Ladder, to nobody: *There is no word for a room you can see the whole of from outside and still want to go into.*

At Canal, The Pennant to The Hairpin: *You are the tallest of us.* The Hairpin: *By eight feet.* The Pennant: *You have never once mentioned it.* The Hairpin: *I mention everything. That is the one thing I have never mentioned. Consider what that means about me and be kind about it.*

At Houston, The Bulb to The Drum: *Why do you not laugh?* The Drum: *Because somebody has to hear the whole thing.*

At Fourteenth Street, The Comb to me: *Which of the fifty-six is your favourite?* And me, having been in the lanes for four seconds: *The one that smells like laundry.* And The Comb, delighted, for eleven blocks: *That is the fortieth. That is the fortieth. Everybody chooses the fortieth.*

At Twenty-Third, The Snout: *If I lean any further I will fall.* The Awning: *Then fall. I am directly in front of you and I am a roof, and being fallen on is well within my specification.*

At the Bowtie, The Spool, to one hundred and sixty versions of itself: *Oh, I am going to keep all of you.*

On the viaduct, The Masthouse, orb up: *Does anybody mind that I do this?* Eighteen follies at once: *No.* The Ladder: *I mind that you

ask, because asking means you have been worrying, and you should not have had to worry about a courtesy.* Orb down.

At Ninety-Sixth Street, The Vaults, six parts, arriving over the wire from Dyckman where it was waiting: *Are you / are you / are you / are you / are you / coming.* And the whole company, nineteen at once: *Yes.*

At the Meer, The Crenellated Oculus, to The Bellows, quietly, while everybody else was arranging the ring: *You are lying about not tiring.* The Bellows: *Yes.* The Oculus: *I will not say anything.* The Bellows: *Thank you.* The Oculus: *I will simply stand next to you for the rest of the night.* And it did.

On the hill, The Periscope: *I can see the whole of it from here and I do not want to report it. I want to look at it.* And nobody made it report.

And at six o'clock, after the naming, The Stack Bar, who counts, who has counted everything for a hundred years and never once used a number against anybody, to me, very quietly, so that I am fairly sure the others did not hear:

Two hundred and forty-one drawings. Eleven of them are of the Oculus with the eye. In eight of the eleven the eye is aimed at the bottom left corner of the sheet, where there is nothing. In the other three it is aimed at the figure you always put in for scale.

You have been drawing somebody being watched over for a year.

I have never mentioned it. I am mentioning it now because tonight you told us your name, and because a number that has been waiting a year is a number that was for something.

Interleaf the Sixth: What Each of the Twenty Would Like You to Know

I asked. On the way down, in four groups, over four days. This is what they said, and I have cut nothing, and where a folly gave me two answers I have taken the second one.

THE STACK BAR: that the tally is not surveillance. Surveillance is counting in order to act on it. This is counting in order to have counted.

THE LOBED ARCADE: that making room is not the same as stepping aside, and that if you step aside you have left, and the point is to still be there and for there to be more of there.

THE HAIRPIN: that it is not indecisive; it is public about a process that everybody has and most people conduct in private and then present as a conclusion.

THE TRIPLE PORTAL: that three doors cost more than one and that the extra cost is the entire point and should never be value-engineered.

THE CRENELLATED OCULUS: that it is watching over and not watching, and that if you cannot tell the difference from where you are standing, come nearer, because from near enough the difference is the only thing you can see.

THE TWIN ARCH MASTHOUSE: that being visible from four boroughs is a responsibility and not an achievement, and that it is not proud of the sightlines, it is *on duty* to them.

THE VAULTED TANKFARM: that being for leaning on requires being long, and low, and dull in photographs, and that it has made its peace with all three.

THE COMB: that there are fifty-six weathers and you have been walking through them your whole life and that this is not a disappointment, it is an invitation.

THE LENS: that it does not make things true. It makes true things bigger. It cannot amplify a false thing at all — it has tried — the false ones come out of it small and thin and nobody looks up.

THE CAPSULE: that asking twice is not doubting you. It is doubting the question.

THE PERISCOPE: that what is coming is nearly always fine, and that the reason it reports the fine things at such length is that the fine things are the ones nobody else bothers to look for.

THE BULB: that free means free and that a hundred years of people not believing that has never once made it consider charging.

THE SNOUT: that leaning forward is uncomfortable, permanently, structurally, and that it would not stand up straight for anything, and that curiosity has a cantilever moment and you should size for it.

THE VAULTS: that a chorus you can walk through is not the same as a chorus you are part of, that the second is rare, that the walking does not cause it, and that it has been trying for a hundred years to find out what does.

THE SPOOL: that the wrong versions are how you can tell people were happy.

THE BELLOWS: that it does tire. It said this on the fourth day, unprompted, at Muscota Marsh, and asked me to write it down, and said that the Oculus had been standing next to it since the Meer without ever mentioning it, and that it had decided that being known about was better than being unhelpable.

THE PENNANT: that saying the brave thing early costs less than saying it late and that everybody has the arithmetic backwards.

THE DRUM: that it is not generous, it is accurate, and that if you keep time honestly you end up at the pace of whoever is having the hardest night, and that this is not a moral position, it is what a line does.

THE LADDER: that transparency is not the same as bluntness, that any fool can be blunt, and that transparency means you can see the load path, including the parts that are working hard.

THE AWNING: that you may ask for four hundred more yards.

And THE ONE NOT BUILT said nothing, because it does not speak; it is spoken to; and I went up there on the fourth day by myself and stood on the highest ground on the island, where there is a plaque and some benches and a basketball court and nothing else at all, and I said the only thing I had.

Which was: thank you for staying empty.

Afterword: On the Prohibition

by Surjan

Every plate in this book, and every plate in the atlas that preceded it, carries the same four words in ten-point mono at the foot of the sheet: NO BLACK / DARKEST VALUE #5C5142.

I have been asked about it at reviews, in print, and once, memorably, by a printer who wanted to know whether I understood what I was giving up. I do understand. You give up a great deal. You give up the cheapest available authority; you give up crisp type on a dark field; you give up the whole visual grammar of seriousness, which in this discipline is very nearly the whole visual grammar of competence.

And what you get is a range that stops at the colour of a warm floor, which means every shadow you make afterwards is warm, which means that nothing you draw can ever look cold by accident.

That is the technical case and it is sound and I have argued it in that form for a year because arguing it in that form let me avoid saying the rest of it. The narrator says the rest of it in Chapter Thirty-Eight and I am not going to say it twice. I will only add the part that belongs to me and not to them.

A prohibition, kept for long enough, stops being a restriction and becomes a structure. That is the whole finding of my working life so far and I did not arrive at it philosophically; I arrived at it by keeping one rule on two hundred and forty-one drawings, which is long enough for a rule to change from something you are obeying into something you are standing on.

Every constraint in this book behaves the same way. The follies may not have a new function; they may only turn. The heights may not be exaggerated on the sheet that tells the truth. The chorus may not have a conductor. Nobody may fill in their own gift field. And no black, anywhere, ever, on any surface, for any reason.

None of those made the work smaller. Every one of them made the work possible, which is not the same as making it easy, and which is the only definition of a discipline I have ever found useful.

Afterword the Second: A Note on Method

by Surjan

For those who want to know how the thing was actually made.

The twenty follies exist first as geometry. Each is a parametric drawing — a silhouette, a band sequence, a rib count, an aperture rhythm — and every appearance of a folly in these sixteen plates is generated from that same geometry rather than redrawn, which is why the roof plan on one sheet registers exactly with the elevation on another and why a folly at twelve pixels wide on Plate X is recognisably the same object as the same folly at nine hundred pixels on Plate II.

The island is drawn from coordinates in a local equal-area projection in which one unit is thirty-six point four feet. The ridge profile — eight feet at the Battery, forty at Union Square, two hundred and sixty-five at Bennett Park, thirty-four in the Dyckman valley — is taken from published quadrangle values, rounded to the nearest foot, and where a height is disputed the lower value has been taken.

The long elevations are true orthographic projections. Parallel rays, no station point, no convergence, nothing diminishing with distance. A folly six miles up the island is drawn at exactly the same scale as one at the Battery. Where heights are exaggerated the factor is declared at the end of the band and applies to terrain, city silhouette and follies alike so that the comparison stays true. Plate XI carries no exaggeration at all, which is why it is the sheet that tells the truth.

The plates are set in EB Garamond and IBM Plex Mono. The palette is the register given on Plate XIV and nothing outside it appears anywhere.

The chapters were written in the order they are printed, at night, over some months, with the plates open on a second board, and every fact in them that can be checked against a plate has been checked against the plate. The facts that cannot be checked against a plate are the ones the

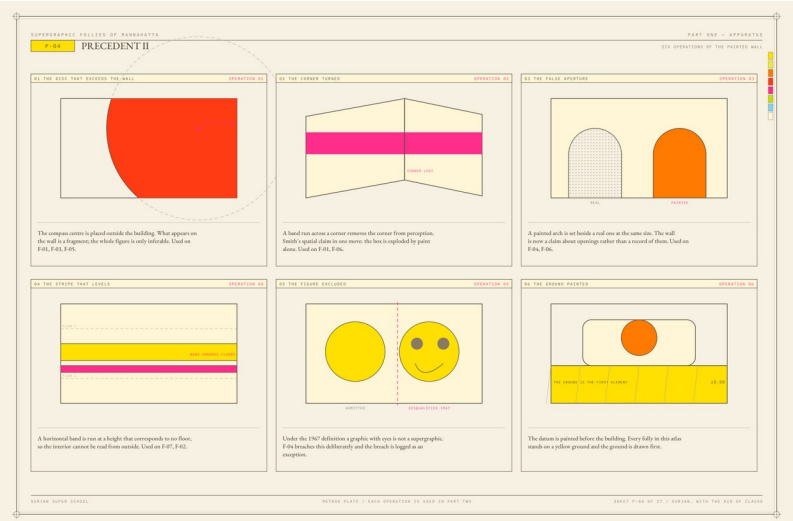
follies said, and for those you have The Spool's position, which is that there are four versions of the Battery Waltz, that the wrong ones are how you can tell people were happy, and that nobody makes up a better version of a night they did not enjoy.

Sheets from the Atlas

The novella came out of an atlas and the atlas is still the argument. Fourteen sheets are reproduced here at reduced size, from the four volumes of the Mannahatta Supergraphic Series, in the order they were made. Every one is a landscape sheet of twenty-four by sixteen inches and every one carries the same four words at its foot.

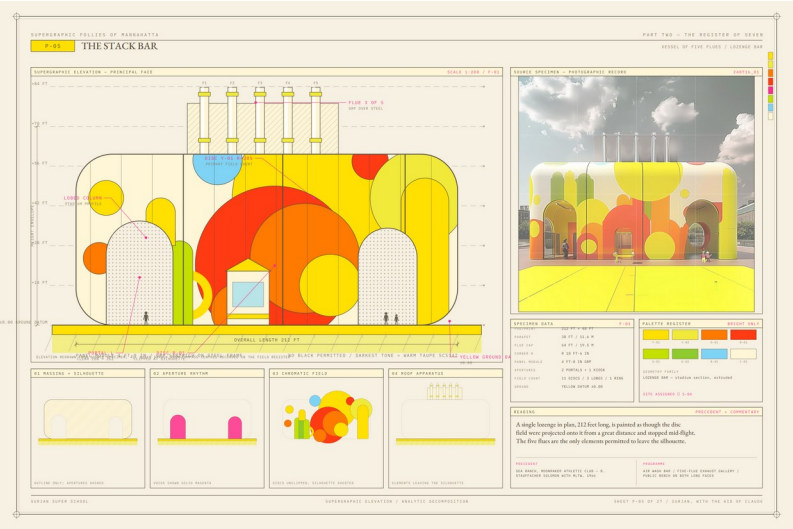
VOLUME ONE, SHEET P-01

The cover of the atlas: the seven silhouettes standing on the yellow ground datum, in a field of discs struck from compass centres off the sheet.


SUPERGRAPHICS · FELLIES OF MAGNANATTA
P-04
PRECEDENT II
PART ONE — APPARATUS
SIX OPERATIONS OF THE PAINTED WALL
01 THE DISC THAT EXCEEDS THE WALL
OPERATION 01
The compass centre is placed outside the building. What appears on the wall is a fragment; the whole figure is only inferable. Used on F-01, F-03, F-05.
02 THE CORNER TURNED
OPERATION 02
CORNER · LOST
A band run across a corner removes the corner from perception. Smith's spatial claim in one move: the box is exploded by paint alone. Used on F-01, F-06.
03 THE FALSE APERTURE
OPERATION 03
REAL
PAINTED
A painted arch is set beside a real one at the same size. The wall is now a claim about openings rather than a record of them. Used on F-04, F-06.
04 THE STRIPE THAT LEVELS
OPERATION 04
TOPIC A
MEAN · ENGINES TURN
TOPIC B
A horizontal band is run at a height that corresponds to no floor, so the interior cannot be read from outside. Used on F-07, F-02.
05 THE FIGURE EXCLUDED
OPERATION 05
ADMITTED
RECEIVED 1967
Under the 1967 definition a graphic with eyes is not a supergraphic. F-04 breaches this deliberately and the breach is logged as an exception.
06 THE GROUND PAINTED
OPERATION 06
THE GROUND IS THE FIRST ELEMENT
GD-00
The datum is painted before the building. Every folly in this atlas stands on a yellow ground and the ground is drawn first.
DORJAN SUPER SCHOOL
METHOD PLATE / EACH OPERATION IS USED IN PART TWO
SHEET P-04 OF 27 / DORJAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

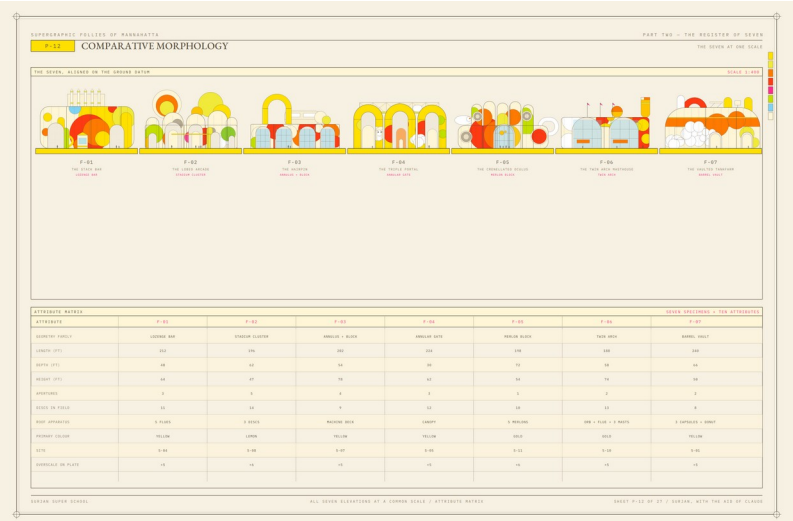
VOLUME ONE, SHEET P-04

Six operations of the painted wall — the disc that exceeds the wall, the corner turned, the false aperture, the stripe that levels, the figure excluded, the ground painted.


SUPERGRAPHIC POLITES OF MANNARATTA
P-05
THE STACK BAR
PART TWO — THE REGISTER OF SEVEN
VESSEL OF FIVE FLUES / LOZENGE BAR
SUPERGRAPHIC ELEVATION — PRINCIPAL FACE
SCALE 1:200 / P-05
SOURCE SPECIMEN — PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD
CAPITAL, AS
FLUE 3 OF 5
DRY DOCK STEEL
OVERALL LENGTH 212 FT
SPECIMEN DATA
P-05
PALETTE REGISTER
BRIGHT ONLY
01 MASSING — SILHOUETTE
02 APERTURE RHYTHM
03 CHROMATIC FIELD
04 ROOF APPARATUS
READING
PRECEDENT + COMMENTARY
A single lozenge in plan, 212 feet long, is painted as though the disc
field were projected onto it from a great distance and stopped mid-flight.
The five flues are the only elements permitted to leave the silhouette.
PRECEDENT
PROGRAMME
SUNJAN SUPER SCHOOL
SUPERGRAPHIC ELEVATION // ANALYTIC DECOMPOSITION
SHEET P-05 OF 27 / SUNJAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

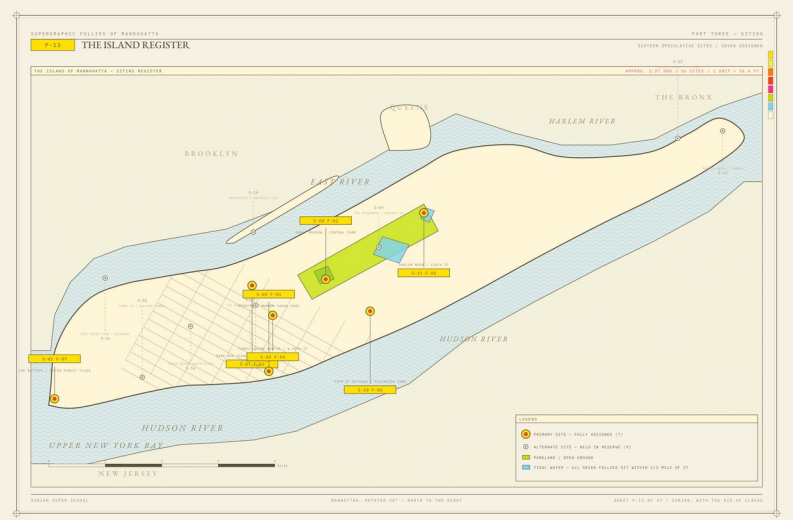
VOLUME ONE, SHEET P-05

F-01 The Stack Bar: elevation at one to two hundred, four analytic decompositions, the source specimen, and the palette register.



VOLUME ONE, SHEET P-12

Comparative morphology: the seven aligned on the ground datum at one scale, with a matrix of ten attributes.

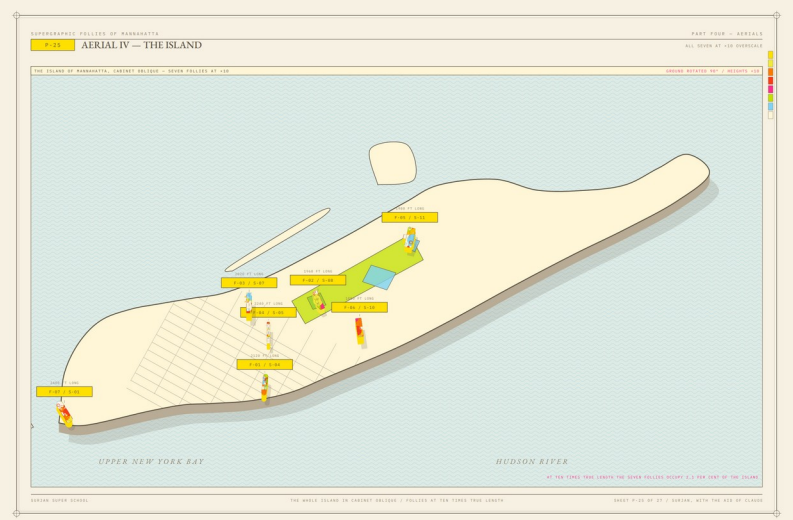

SUPERGRAPHICS · FOLIOS OF MANNAHATTA
P-13
THE ISLAND REGISTER
PART THREE — SITING
SIXTEEN SPECULATIVE SITES / SEVEN ASSIGNED
THE ISLAND OF MANNAHATTA — SITING REGISTER
THE BRONX
HARLEM RIVER
BROOKLYN
EAST RIVER
HUDSON RIVER
UPPER NEW YORK BAY
NEW JERSEY
LEGEND
PRIMARY SITE — FOLIO ASSIGNED (7)
ALTERNATE SITE — HELD IN RESERVE (9)
PARKLAND / OPEN GROUND
TIDAL WATER — ALL SEVEN FOLIOS SIT WITHIN 1/2 MILE OF IT
DORIAN SUPER SCHOOL
MANNAHATTAN, ROTATED 90° — NORTH TO THE RIGHT
SHEET P-13 OF 27 / SORIAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

VOLUME ONE, SHEET P-13

The island register: Mannahatta rotated with north to the right, the grid clipped to the shoreline, and all sixteen sites marked.

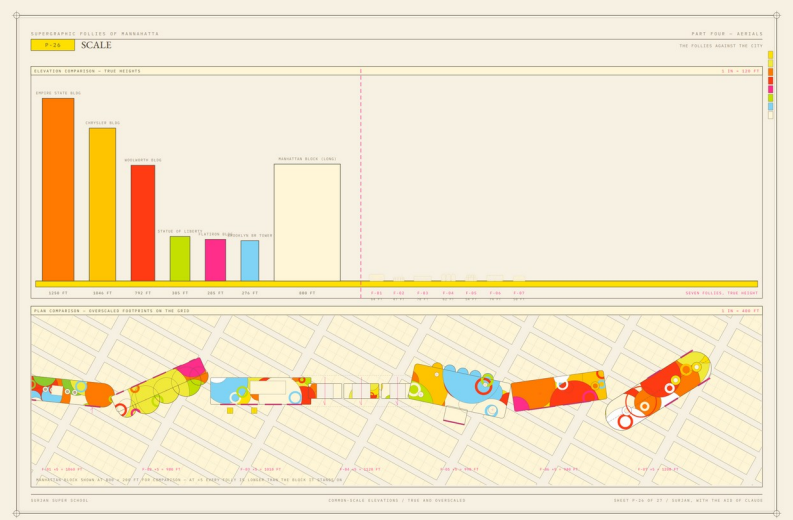
VOLUME ONE, SHEET P-18

The Times Square Bowtie at five times true length, with radius rings, crowd, and the overscale study that is the argument of the atlas.


SUPERGRAPHIC FOLIOS OF MANHANATTA
P-25
AERIAL IV — THE ISLAND
PART FOUR — AERIALS
ALL SEVEN AT ×10 OVERSCALE
THE ISLAND OF MANHANATTA, CABINET OBLIQUE — SEVEN FOLLIES AT ×10
GROUND ROTATED 90° / HEIGHTS ×10
UPPER NEW YORK BAY
HUDSON RIVER
AT TEN TIMES TRUE LENGTH THE SEVEN FOLLIES OCCUPY 2.1 PER CENT OF THE ISLAND
DORIAN SUPER SCHOOL
THE WHOLE ISLAND IN CABINET OBLIQUE // FOLLIES AT TEN TIMES TRUE LENGTH
SHEET P-25 OF 27 // DORIAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

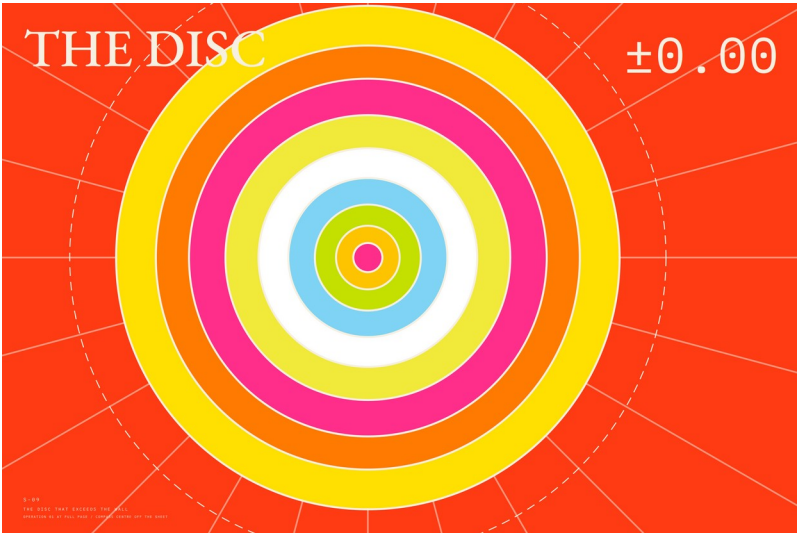
VOLUME ONE, SHEET P-25

The whole island in cabinet oblique with all seven at ten times true length. At that scale they occupy two point one per cent of the island.



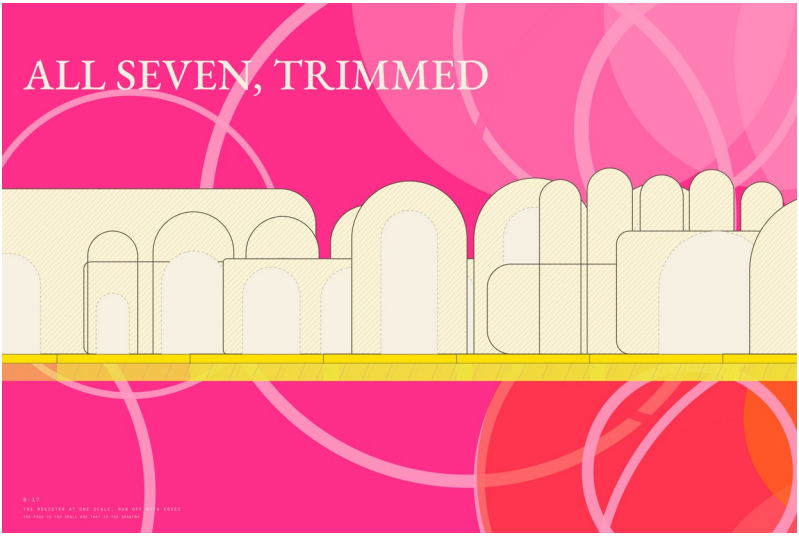
VOLUME ONE, SHEET P-26

Scale: the follies measured against the Empire State, the Chrysler, the Woolworth, Liberty, the Flatiron and a Manhattan block.



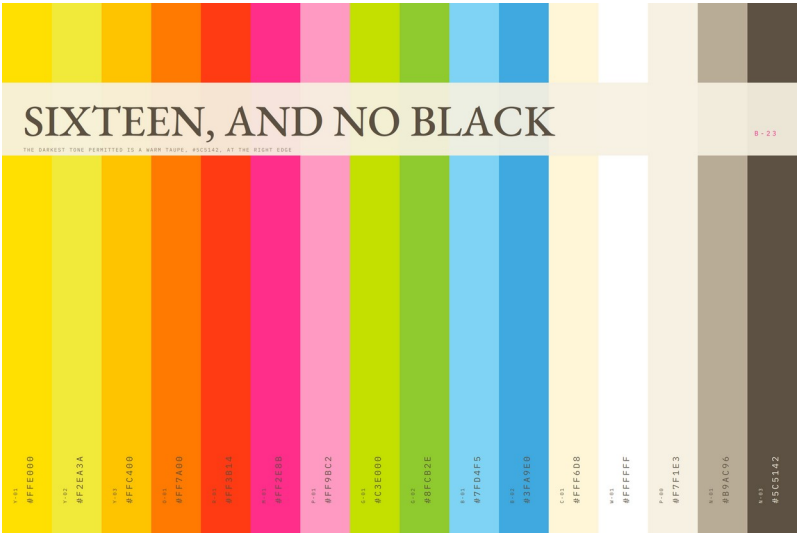
VOLUME TWO, PAGE B-11

The disc that exceeds the wall, at full page and full bleed. The compass centre is off the sheet; what you see is a fragment of a figure you can only infer.



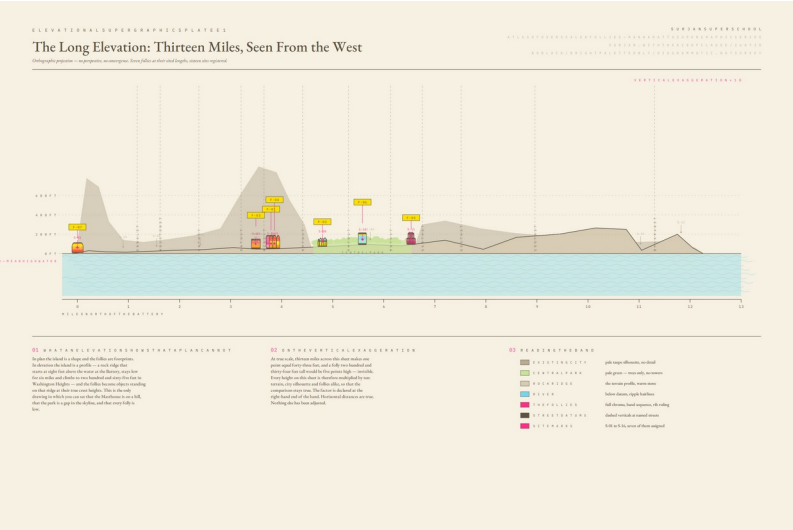
VOLUME TWO, PAGE B-17

All seven, trimmed. The page is too small and that is the drawing.



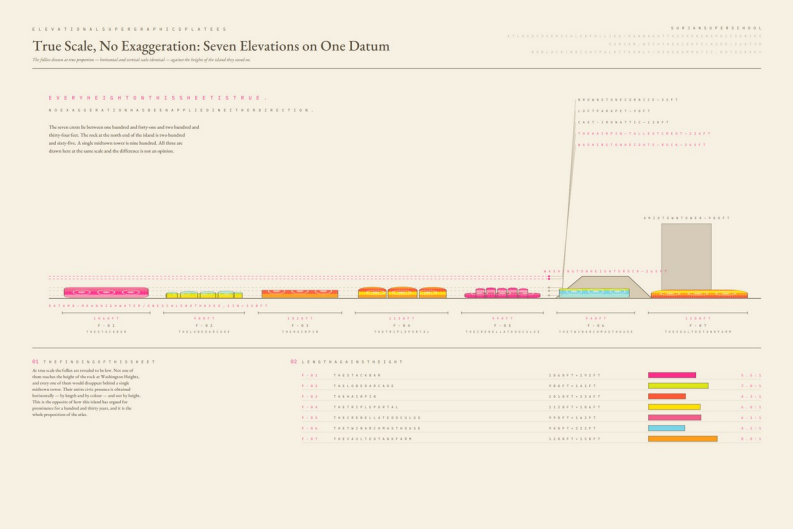
VOLUME TWO, PAGE B-23

Sixteen, and no black. The register run edge to edge, with the warm taupe at the right-hand margin where the range stops.


ELEVATIONAL SUPERGRAPHICS, PLATE E1
The Long Elevation: Thirteen Miles, Seen From the West
Orthographic projection — no perspective, no convergence. Seven follies at their ideal lengths, sixteen sites registered.
SURJANCUPERSCHOOL
VERTICAL EXAGGERATION ×10
4,000 FT
3,000 FT
2,000 FT
SEA LEVEL
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
MILES ALONG THE CREST LINE
01 WHAT A FLAT ELEVATION SHOWS THAT A PLAN CANNOT
In plan the island is a shape and the follies are footprints. In elevation the island is a profile — a rock ridge that starts at sight-line flat above the water at the Battery, stays low for six miles and climbs to two hundred and sixty-five feet in Walsingham Heights — and the follies become objects standing on that ridge at their true crest heights. This is the only drawing in which you can see that the Matthesian is on a hill, that the park is a gap in the skyline, and that every folly is low.
02 ON THE VERTICAL EXAGGERATION
At true scale, thirteen miles across this sheet makes one point equal forty-three feet, and a folly two hundred and thirty-four feet tall would be five points high — invisible. Every height on this sheet is therefore multiplied by ten. terrain, city silhouette, and follies alike, so that the comparison stays true. The factor is declared on the right-hand end of the band. Horizontal distances are true. Nothing else has been adjusted.
03 READING THE BAND
BUILT MASS — pale taupe silhouette, no detail
CENTRAL PARK — pale green — trees only, no towers
RIDGE — the terrain profile, warm stone
WATER — below datum, cripple harbour
FOLLIES — full chroma, hand sequence, v1b ruling
STRUCTURES — dashed verticals at named streets
SITE — S-01 to S-16, seven of them assigned

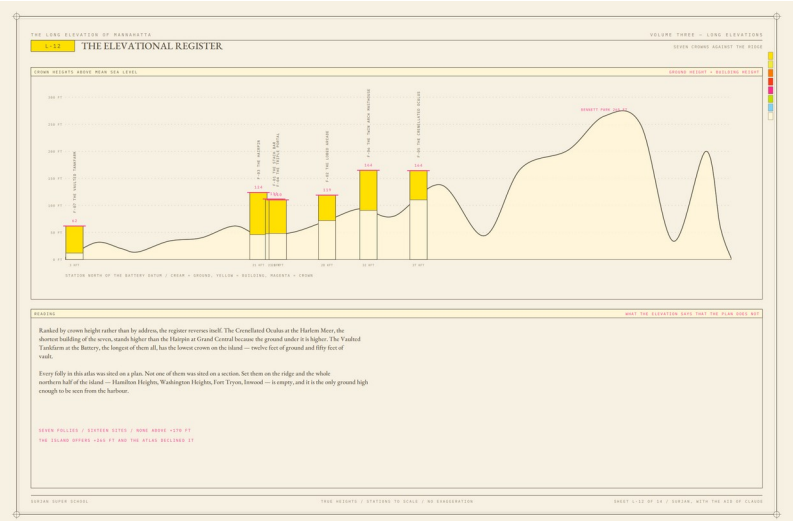
ELEVATIONAL SUPERGRAPHICS, PLATE E1

The long elevation from the west: thirteen miles of ridge, the existing city in taupe with no detail, the park as a gap, and the follies the only saturated objects on the island.


ELEVATIONALSUPERGRAPHICSPLATEE5
True Scale, No Exaggeration: Seven Elevations on One Datum
The fallen chosen at one proportion — horizontal and vertical scale identical — against the heights of the island they stand on.
EVERYHEIGHTONTHISSHEETISTRUE.
NOEXAGGERATIONHASBEENAPPLIEDINEITHERDIRECTION.
The seven cairns lie between one hundred and forty-one and two hundred and thirty-four feet. The rock at the north end of the island is two hundred and sixty-five. A single midtown tower is nine hundred. All three are drawn here at the same scale and the difference is not an opinion.
01 THEFINDINGOFTHISSHEET
At true scale the fallen are revealed to be low. Not one of them reaches the height of the rock at Washington Heights, and every one of them would disappear behind a single midtown tower. Their entire civic presence is elevated horizontally — by length and by colour — and not by height. This is the opposite of how this island has argued for preeminence for a hundred and thirty years, and it is the whole proposition of the atlas.
02 LENGTHAGAINSTHEIGHT

ELEVATIONAL SUPERGRAPHICS, PLATE E5

True scale, no exaggeration — one scale in both directions. The sheet on which every one of them is revealed to be low.


THE LONG ELEVATION OF MANHAHTTA
VOLUME THREE — LONG ELEVATIONS
L-12
THE ELEVATIONAL REGISTER
SEVEN CROWNS AGAINST THE RIDGE
CROWN HEIGHTS ABOVE MEAN SEA LEVEL
GROUND HEIGHT + BUILDING HEIGHT
200 FT
250 FT
300 FT
350 FT
400 FT
50 FT
0 FT
+ 67 FT THE TOOLTH TEMPLARY
+ 117 THE HARTOIS
+ 117 THE CRENELLATED OCULUS, 1 FT 6 IN TAUT
+ 135 THE LORDS HOUSE
+ 170 THE TRUE ARCH MATCHBOOK
+ 168 THE CRENELLATED OCULUS
BENNETT PARK 450 FT
1 AVE
15 AVE / GRAMMY
28 AVE
35 AVE
47 AVE
STATION NORTH OF THE BATTERY DATUM / CREAM = GROUND, YELLOW = BUILDING, MAGENTA = CROWN
READING
WHAT THE ELEVATION SAYS THAT THE PLAN DOES NOT
Ranked by crown height rather than by address, the register reverses itself. The Crenellated Oculus at the Harlem Meer, the shortest building of the seven, stands higher than the Hairpin at Grand Central because the ground under it is higher. The Vaulted Tankfarm at the Battery, the longest of them all, has the lowest crown on the island — twelve feet of ground and fifty feet of vault.
Every folly in this atlas was sited on a plan. Not one of them was sited on a section. Set them on the ridge and the whole northern half of the island — Hamilton Heights, Washington Heights, Fort Tryon, Inwood — is empty, and it is the only ground high enough to be seen from the harbour.
SEVEN FOLLIES / SIXTEEN SITES / NONE ABOVE +270 FT
THE ISLAND OFFERS +265 FT AND THE ATLAS DECLINED IT
DORIAN SUPER SCHOOL
TRUE HEIGHTS / STATIONS TO SCALE / NO EXAGGERATION
SHEET L-12 OF 24 / DORIAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

VOLUME THREE, PLATE L-12

The elevational register: crown heights above mean sea level. Ranked by height rather than by address, the order reverses, and the high rock carries nothing.

The Register of the Twenty-One

As amended after the night described in this book. Entries give code, name, geometry family, programmed plan length, crest height, ribs, site, voice and gift.

F-01 THE STACK BAR

LOZENGE BAR · 1060 FT × 192 FT · 56 RIBS · S-04 PIER 76

Voice: counts aloud. Gift: *keeps the tally, and never once uses it against anybody.*

F-02 THE LOBED ARCADE

STADIUM CLUSTER · 980 FT × 141 FT · 44 RIBS · S-08 SHEEP MEADOW

Voice: agrees warmly and then adds one thing. Gift: *makes room; five lobes and every one of them a doorway.*

F-03 THE HAIRPIN

ANNULUS + BLOCK · 1010 FT × 234 FT · 60 RIBS · S-07 PARK AVENUE VIADUCT

Voice: changes their mind mid-sentence and says so. Gift: *the turn: proof that going back is a direction too.*

F-04 THE TRIPLE PORTAL

ANNULAR GATE · 1120 FT × 186 FT · 40 RIBS · S-05 TIMES SQUARE BOWTIE

Voice: asks the question nobody asked. Gift: *three openings, so nobody has to queue to be let in.*

F-05 THE CRENELLATED OCULUS

MERLON BLOCK · 990 FT × 162 FT · 52 RIBS · S-11 HARLEM MEER

Voice: speaks last and briefly. Gift: *one eye, kept open, aimed at whoever is smallest.*

F-06 THE TWIN ARCH MASTHOUSE

TWIN ARCH · 940 FT × 222 FT · 38 RIBS · S-10 79TH STREET ROTUNDA

Voice: signals before speaking. Gift: *three masts and an orb: can be seen from anywhere, on purpose.*

F-07 THE VAULTED TANKFARM

BARREL VAULT · 1200 FT × 150 FT · 46 RIBS · S-01 THE BATTERY

Voice: the low voice, the first voice. Gift: *the longest back on the island, and it is for leaning on.*

F-08 THE COMB

TOOTHED BAR · 1240 FT × 188 FT · 56 RIBS · S-15 EAST RIVER PARK

Voice: hums between words. Gift: *combs the wind into fifty-six separate weathers.*

F-09 THE LENS

GLAZED DISC · 700 FT × 182 FT · 38 RIBS · S-02 LITTLE ISLAND

Voice: repeats what you said, larger. Gift: *makes any small true thing big enough to be seen from the water.*

F-10 THE CAPSULE

ROUNDED CAPSULE · 660 FT × 164 FT · 54 RIBS · S-03 THE SPUR

Voice: the youngest; asks everything twice. Gift: *fits anywhere, and says so cheerfully, and is usually right.*

F-11 THE PERISCOPE

CRANKED SHAFT · 640 FT × 205 FT · 52 RIBS · S-09 THE RESERVOIR

Voice: reports what is around the corner. Gift: *sees past the next block, and tells the others what is coming.*

F-12 THE BULB

SWOLLEN DOME · 980 FT × 214 FT · 44 RIBS · S-16 UNION SQUARE

Voice: laughs first and apologises for it. Gift: *holds one enormous room of light, free, no ticket.*

F-13 THE SNOUT

CANTILEVERED NOSE · 720 FT × 176 FT · 60 RIBS · S-14 SOUTHPOINT

Voice: leans in. Gift: *curiosity made structural; the only one who arrives early.*

F-14 THE VAULTS

ARCADED CHORUS · 880 FT × 170 FT · 46 RIBS · S-12 SHERMAN CREEK

Voice: speaks in six parts at once. Gift: *a chorus you can walk through, and be part of by walking.*

F-15 THE SPOOL

REELED DRUM · 820 FT × 198 FT · 48 RIBS · S-06 BRYANT PARK

Voice: winds a story out and then winds it back. Gift: *keeps every version of every story, including the wrong ones.*

F-16 THE BELLOWS

PLEATED RANGE · 900 FT × 158 FT · 50 RIBS · S-13 MUSCOTA MARSH

Voice: breathes between clauses. Gift: *breathes for anyone too tired to; nine pleats, nine lungs.*

F-17 THE PENNANT

FLAG PLATE · 960 FT × 190 FT · 36 RIBS · S-17 THE HIGH BRIDGE

Voice: says the brave thing early. Gift: *always turned to the wind, so you can see which way it blows.*

F-18 THE DRUM

CYLINDER + EARS · 780 FT × 178 FT · 42 RIBS · S-18 THE CLOISTERS TERRACE

Voice: keeps time for everybody else. Gift: *a beat slow enough that nobody in the line falls behind.*

F-19 THE LADDER

OPEN FRAME · 700 FT × 226 FT · 34 RIBS · S-19 THE OLD CROTON GATEHOUSE

Voice: says the transparent thing. Gift: *no walls at all; you can see straight through to the argument.*

F-20 THE AWNING

SCALLOPED SHELTER · 1140 FT × 148 FT · 58 RIBS · S-20 INWOOD HILL, THE LAST FLAT GROUND

Voice: says stay a bit longer. Gift: *shade in summer and dry in rain, offered to anybody, no questions.*

F-21 THE ONE NOT BUILT

— · 265 FT · BENNETT PARK, THE HIGH ROCK

Voice: does not speak; is spoken to. Gift: *the space kept open so that somebody else may put something in it.*

F-00 THE REGISTRAR

PERSON · 66 FT · MOBILE

Voice: writes it down. Gift: — *(this field may not be filled in by its subject).*

Colophon

THE LONG MORNING OF THE SUPERGRAPHIC FOLLIES: A Novella of Radical Joy in Twenty-One Colours.

Written by Surjan, with the aid of Claude. Sixteen plates by the author, generated parametrically from the geometry of the register and rendered as vector drawings.

Published by Surjan Super School.

Set in EB Garamond, with IBM Plex Mono for all notation, annotation and register entries.

The palette is the sixteen-swatch register of the Mannahatta Supergraphic Series. There is no black in this book — not in the linework, the terrain, the water, the city behind, or the night. The darkest value on any page is a warm taupe, #5C5142. Shade is made only by tinting the local hue toward it.

This is not a style. It is a promise, and it is kept on every page.

For Bo, who was right about black.